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An Appreciation of Phoenician Art as expressed
in their Ivory-Carvings

By

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Phoenician Ivory-Carving

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P R E F A C E

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A B S T R A C T

In this study of Phoenician Art as expressed in their Ivory-Carvings, the present writer attempts to trace the origin, technique and significance of the various motifs used by the Ancient Phoenicians in their art from the earliest times to the end of the Golden Age of Phoenicia. After a preliminary and short introduction on the growth of Phoenician art in general the writer proceeds with the study of the collections which have been discovered so far in a chronological sequence, starting with the ivories discovered at Ras Shamra and ending with those of Nimrud.

The aim of the author is to trace the origin of the various motifs which were used by the Phoenicians, to examine the significance of each wherever possible, and to find out whether these typically Phoenician representations have any religious significance. After a detailed description of the various groups of ivories, the writer seeks to demonstrate the related characters of the groups from Samaria, Arslan Tash and Nimrud because of the similarity in imagery and techniques in their subject matter and execution. The similarities are emphasized and treated as single units while the differences are underlined wherever possible. The significance of each motif is discussed fully, and an attempt has been made at giving the source and origin of each.

The author ends her discussion with the conclusions drawn from this study, and demonstrates that although Phoenician art as expressed in ivory-carving is composite in character and draws freely on the repertoires of her neighbours yet it is not lacking in originality and has a character of its own visible in their grouping of the borrowed motifs.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE BIRTH OF PHOENICIAN ART

One of the important manifestations of Phoenician art is ivory carving. Phoenician art itself may be defined as a composite art. This definition, however, is more general than precise, for it only informs us that this art developed out of several trends. If we take it literally as something made up of several parts, we should expect to see in it a patch work of several blends. "Art" says Sir Flinders Petrie "is an expression of the thought and feelings in harmony with its own conditions" while "the bad art is that which is mechanical and fails to give expression". Furthermore according to him "the age of copying is the only despicable age".¹ There is no doubt that Phoenicia copied or rather borrowed freely from the repertoires of the neighbouring countries, yet one must not forget that the art of Phoenicia emanated more from her own historical traditions and developments than her natural environment. Her geographical position helped in producing her own history. This coastal region which was made up of independent city-states lay on the martial highway and trade routes of the great

¹Sir Flinders: Arts and Crafts of Ancient Egypt, p. 1, Petrie brings out the surrounding environmental conditions from which certain qualities developed into the minds of the Egyptian artists and according to which they produced their art.

empires of the past, including amongst others, Egypt on the one hand and Mesopotamia on the other. Palestine, Syria and especially Phoenicia became common ground where civilizations and cultures met and mingled. The Proto-Phoenician Canaanites, who later gave birth to the nation known as Phoenicians, were one of the ancient folk who were brought under the direct impact of ancient civilizations. They borrowed freely from their neighbours, but they cast their lore into a new mould, and gave it individuality. The originality of the Phoenician artist lay in his choice of the themes and motives, and the way they were grouped and arranged. In defining his originality G. Conteneau says: "Son originalité consiste dans le choix des thèmes dans leur agencement suivant un ordre qui lui est propre, dans l'adjonction d'une influence étrangère a un motif déjà pris à un autre art. Ce n'est jamais un art qui commande; il suit."¹

One of the earliest and most interesting relationships which existed between the Phoenicians and their neighbours, was that which was established between Byblos and Egypt.² This southern influence could be detected in almost every facet of the Gibelite culture, and it is due to this fact that P. Montet calls the Gibelite civilization, "the daughter of Egypt".³ However it is very difficult to know when the two countries came

¹G. Conteneau: La Civilisation Phénicienne, p. 220.

²P. Montet: Byblos et l'Egypte.

³Ibid: p. 287.

into contact with each other, yet the extreme antiquity of the relations that existed between them, is concealed in the Legend of Isis and Osiris and the Tale of the Two Brothers.¹ Moreover these legends give us additional proof that relations were beneficial to both countries. In the first legend, Plutarch tells us that when Isis reached Byblos in search of her murdered husband Osiris, she met the maids of the Gibeonite queen. She fixed their hair and gave them the secret of the beautiful perfume she used on her body. By this good act and other services as well, Isis wormed her way into the graces of the queen, who in turn showed her the pillars made of the tree where the body of Osiris was hidden and allowed her to cut them down and take them back to Egypt with her. In the second legend, Bata, who after quarreling with his brother Anubis, went to live in the Valley of the Cedar where he concealed his heart in a flower of the akh tree. When the Egyptian soldiers came to take his wife to the Pharaoh, he killed them. The soldiers came back a second time, and brought with them an Egyptian woman carrying with her all the beautiful accessories that a woman of her country would wear. All these attractive ornaments could not but break down the resistance of Bata's wife, so that she instantly told the soldiers where Bata had hidden his heart; whereupon the soldiers cut the tree

¹G. Conteneau: La Civilisation Phénicienne, pp. 35-6;
P. Montet, Byblos et l'Égypte, pp. 272-3.
Pritchard: Ancient Near Eastern Texts, pp. 23-25.

and Bata lost his life. These two legends express in their own manner the fact that the Gibelites exchanged their timber for Egyptian luxuries. We are now certain that some sort of an economical bond cemented their friendship. Egypt lacked the wood which she needed for the construction of her huge buildings, her boats, her furniture and her funerary equipment, and the ideal source of wood was found at Byblos. Aside from having a well sheltered harbour, Byblos was close enough to the forests of Lebanon not to cause trouble in the overland transportation of timber.

Our first concrete evidence concerning this relation comes from archaeological research both in Byblos and in Egypt. Some fragments of diorite and alabaster vases have been found at Byblos with the name of Khasekhemoui the last king of the Second Thinite Dynasty. Besides these, many objects belonging to the early period of the Old Kingdom (2800-2300 B.C.) were found in Byblos, such as cylindrical beads of alabaster, flint knives and statuettes very similar to those found at Hierakonpolis in Egypt.¹ Snefru, the founder of the Fourth Dynasty was a powerful monarch, who built the first real pyramid; he expanded and regularized trade as well.² Although no direct archaeological evidence was found at Byblos belonging to him, yet the Palermo Stone mentions the arrival in Egypt of 40 vessels loaded with

¹P. Montet: Byblos et l'Egypte, p. 271.

²James Henry Breasted: A History of the Ancient Egyptians, p. 90.

cedar and pine wood, the "akh and mer".¹ Some alabaster fragments were also found bearing the names of Cheops and Mycerinus the great pyramid builders of the IVth Dynasty.

By the time of the Sixth Dynasty, relations between Byblos and Egypt became frequent, as suggested by an inscription from a tomb at Aswan belonging to a noble called Hui whose subordinate Khnumhotep "went with his masters Teti and Hui eleven times to Punt and Byblos."²

From this inscription we can infer that the age or period was that of prosperity and peace. People could travel safely from Byblos to Egypt and vice-versa. Trade flourished also as attested by the large number of alabaster vases and fragments of vases that were found in Byblos inscribed with the names of Teti and especially of Pepi I and II.

The Egyptian impact on the Gibelite culture was felt as early as the time of Khasekhemoui of the Second Dynasty, and perhaps even earlier. In no other country was Egyptian influence so pronounced as it was in Phoenicia, and especially at Byblos during the Early Bronze Age, and more in the later periods. In religion there were close similarities. The Gibelites honoured the Egyptian Ra' as their own sun-god. However it was differentiated from the Egyptian original by calling it "Ra' of the Mountainous Countries" or "Ra' who is on the Lake

¹P. Montet, op.cit., p. 271.

²Ibid., p. 8.

of the Pharoah".¹ The goddess of Byblos, Baalat Gebal, was equated with the Egyptian Goddess Hathor, she was her friend and wore the horned sun-disk on her head.²

One of the most interesting discoveries belonging to the Third Millennium B.C. made at Byblos and found in the "foundation deposits" of the temple which Montet erroneously called the Syrian Temple, is a cylinder seal 5 cms. long, decorated in low relief and inscribed in Egyptian hieroglyphs.³ Two Phoenician deities are represented, Baalat Gebal, and Hai Taw. Baalat Gebal is already depicted in the Egyptian style or more precisely like Hathor. She is dressed in the long and narrow tunic, holds a sceptre decorated with a lotus bud, and wears the horned disk of the Egyptian goddess. The other deity is Khay-Taw or Hai-Taw, the god of the Nega, a country which was mentioned in four texts of the Middle and New Kingdoms of Egypt, and from which pine and fir timber was imported. This cylinder seal was of Gibelite manufacture, as is shown in the clumsy execution of the hieroglyphs.

After the collapse of the Sixth Dynasty in Egypt, and because of the anarchy caused by the rise of feudalism in the country, the Semitic Amorites invaded Palestine, Phoenicia and Syria, destroyed the Early Bronze Age civilization of the Third

¹Ibid., p. 287.

²Ibid., p. 35, Fig. 6.

³P. Montet: Byblos et l'Egypte, pp. 62-8, Fig. 20.
Cf. G. Conteneau: La Civilisation Phénicienne, p. 120.

Millennium B.C. and stifled progress until the arrival of the Torque Wearers from the North, sometimes between the Twenty First and Twentieth Centuries B.C. With the end of the Sixth Dynasty around 2292 B.C. the Old Kingdom fell and Egypt entered into her First Intermediate Period. Relations with Byblos were severed and Byblos itself lay in ruins due to the destruction and conflagration caused by the onslaught of the Amorites. Moreover the archaeological evidence both in Egypt and Byblos gives no indication that there was any contact between the two countries from the Twenty Third to the Twentieth Centuries B.C.

Contact was however re-established in the Second Millennium B.C. between Byblos and the Pharaohs of the Twelfth Dynasty in Egypt. The influence of Egypt at Byblos was strongest during this period. Both countries enjoyed a great period of prosperity. Furthermore many hieroglyphic texts were found in Gibelite tombs, giving a faithful picture of the relationship of the Pharaoh to the Gibelite king during the Middle Kingdom. From these texts we learn that the Egyptian Pharaohs designated the king of Byblos as "noble prince" a title given only to the governors of provinces in Egypt, while the Syrian and Palestinian kings were generally called "chiefs".¹ During this period Hathor absorbed Baalat Gebal completely. A scribe writing to a colleague wishes him to have the "grace of Hathor, Lady of Byblos".²

¹P. Montet, Byblos et l'Egypte, p. 277.

²Ibid., p. 275.

The excavations at Byblos give precious documents for the study of Phoenician art of the Second Millennium B.C. According to Sir Leonard Woolley, it was this millennium which actually "witnessed the first appearance of Phoenician Art".¹

The beginning of this millennium is noted for the peace and prosperity that were established and encouraged by the political situation at the time. First the predominance of the Pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom (2000-1800 B.C.) and later the pacification of the surrounding lands by Hammurabi of Babylonia, (1800-1750 B.C.). It is due to this peaceful situation that trade flourished and brought about an exchange of ideas and motives between the different countries.

The Gibelite artisans now started adapting some motives that occurred frequently in Egyptian works like the winged disc, the uraeus, the falcon, the lotus and the crowns of Upper and Lower Egypt. However the Phoenicians did not always comprehend the meaning of some of the symbols they employed. They used them for decorative purposes only. For example the artisan in copying the falcon who holds in each claw a seal mounted on a ring, not understanding its significance, uses the seal as a beginning of a garland that follows the lines of the wings and reaches the top of the pectoral, where it develops into two deformed ankh signs.²

Besides the numerous artistic works which consisted almost entirely of Egyptian motives, (such as the gold pendent

¹Woolley, Mesopotamia and the Near East, p. 105.

²G. Conteneau: La Civilisation Phénicienne, p. 124.

and gold pectoral¹ that are now found in the National Museum in Beirut), the Phoenicians produced other artistic works that reveal the composite character of their art. A most striking example of the grouping of motives and the methods of design is the gold dagger and sheath from Byblos which was found by M. Dunand in a temple deposit in 1932. The figure represented on the hilt is Egyptian in appearance; closer inspection however betrays its extreme slenderness which is nowhere paralleled in Egyptian monuments. The seemingly white crown that the person is wearing, is not globular at the highest point like the Egyptian original; it is rather Syrian in conception in that it is flat and flower-like at the top.² R. Dussaud thinks that the dagger had a votive significance, on the evidence that the figure on the hilt attending the home-coming of a caravan of merchants was identified with Reshef by Dunand.³

The sheath includes in its design men and animals. The lion and the antelope were everywhere known and represented in the Near East. The baboon is Egyptian, while the kneeling men find parallels in North Syria on seals found at Chagar Bazaar, and Ras Shamra, both from the Eighteenth Century B.C.⁴ The short kilt, short cut hair, and beardless faces are Egyptian

¹D.C. Baramki: Phoenicia and the Phoenicians, Pl. 1.

²H. Frankfort: Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient, p. 138; Dussaud: l'Art Phoenicien du II Millenaire, pp. 38-39, Fig. 5.

³Ibid.

⁴R.D. Barnett: The Nimrud Ivories, p. 36, Figs. 3,5. The Ras Shamra seal shows two kneeling men wearing kilts, The Chagar Bazaar seal represents a man kneeling between two winged griffins.

derivations. The man riding a donkey is rather a local invention.¹ However our interest lies mainly in the heterogeneous character of the theme. An Egyptian figure, is holding the Mesopotamian harpé and riding a horse in the manner of the Phoenicians.

Another example of this Phoenician art is the bronze harpé dagger found in the sarcophagus of the king Ybshemouabi of Byblos contemporary with Amenemhat III of the Twelfth Dynasty (2000-1777 B.C.) Its shape is typically Mesopotamian, and can easily be traced on Mesopotamian monuments from very early times. In Phoenicia, the harpé was manufactured under strong Egyptian influence, for on this particular scimitar we can detect a gold uraeus, inserted throughout its length.

A new influence coming from the west began to be weakly felt in Phoenicia during this period. The silver ribbed vessel,² and the spiral motif found on a piece of metal are Aegean in character. This Aegean influence is felt even more in North Phoenicia at Ras-Shamra - Ugarit. In one of the tombs of Level IV at Ras Shamra there were found fragments of a cup with very thin walls, known as the egg-shell ware of Kamares, as well as painted or burnished red or black slipped vessels from Crete.³ Ugarit, a Phoenician outpost, was in fact another place where

¹Ibid., p. 53 - Dr. Barnett thinks that the beast is a horse and not a donkey because of its long tail.

²G. Conteneau: La Civilisation Phénicienne. Pl. II.

³C. Schaeffer, Ugaritica I, p. 22.

influences met and mingled. However it is not yet certain when the proto-Phoenician Canaanites established themselves at Ras Shamra; their appearance in the city seems to go back to around the Middle of the Third Millennium B.C. for in Level III there were found examples of the so-called Canaanite pottery, burnished in red or black, or combed not painted.¹ The Egyptian Pharaohs of the Twelfth Dynasty (2000-1777 B.C.) seem to have secured also a foothold in the city, for the subjection of Ugarit was included in the policy of the Middle Kingdom, in order to secure the trade route mainly for the supply of raw material from the Levant. Gifts inscribed with the name of Senusert I were found in the city. Amongst others there was a necklace of carnelian beads and amulets, carved with the royal cartouche; remains of two sphinxes, bearing the cartouche of Amenemhat III and a stele of Senusert-Ankh, who was probably an ambassador of the pharaohs established at the court of the Ugaritic monarchs.²

This period of prosperity at the beginning of the Second Millennium B.C. was brought to an end sometime between 1780 and 1730 B.C. when Egypt relapsed into her second Intermediate Period. "About 1750 B.C., a large horde of Asianic tribes consisting amongst others of Hurrians, threw themselves on North Syria, Phoenicia and Palestine, where their numbers were swollen by

¹ Ibid., pp. 13-15.

² Ibid., pp. 20-22.

the local Amorites and Canaanites, the former subjects of Egypt; they invaded Egypt and held the country in subjection for over 100 years."¹ The newcomers, who were called Hyksos by Manetho, ruled Egypt with an iron hand, arousing the hatred and contempt in the hearts of the natives, until they were actually thrown out of the country around 1580 B.C. by Ahmes I the founder of the Eighteenth Dynasty. The peace which was then established by Ahmes in this part of the world, was consolidated by the conquests of Thothmes III (1479-1452 B.C.), under whose reign, Syria and Phoenicia became Egyptian provinces.

The Mitannians, an Indo European folk, established themselves between the Habur and the Euphrates river in North East Syria. They created a kingdom in the hinterland to counterpart the Egyptian Empire which included most of the coastal part of Syria. The main body of the population of the Mitanni was composed of the Hurrian element, while the Mitannians formed the elite class of the population. Little is known about both Hurrians and Mitannians alike; their art however consisted of a combination of Mesopotamian and local traditions, with Egyptian and Aegean stimuli.² The only distinctive Mitannian design is found on their seals and pottery.³

¹D.G. Baramki, Phoenicia and the Phoenicians, p. 21.

²H. Frankfort, The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient, p. 141.

³Ibid. Painted pottery in white on a dark background is found on Fig. 64.

Under the Mitannians, Syrian motives on the one hand were revived or accentuated, such as the griffins and female sphinxes, the hare and the eagle headed men; on the other hand new items were introduced by them the most important of which was the royal hunt either on foot or in chariot.¹

The hostilities which existed between Mitanni and Egypt stopped when both countries concluded an alliance during the reign of Amenhotep II. An age of prosperity and peace followed at Ugarit. The Mitannian era, circa 1440-1380 B.C. at Ras Shamra saw the rise of a new quarter at Minet el Beida the port of Ugarit, where imitations of alabaster vases and Cypriote bilbils were found. The pact between the two countries was sealed by marriage alliances. The Egyptian Pharaohs started marrying Mitannian princesses. Thothmes IV made the first step, followed by Amenhotep III who married another Mitannian princess noted for the unprecedented position she held in the official monuments of Egypt.²

Mr. Henry Frankfort assigns the two gold bowls that were found at Ras Shamra to the Mitannian era. "The gold cup" says the author "is an excellent example of Phoenician syncretism, half a millennium before Phoenicians in the proper sense are known."³ Furthermore Sir L. Woolley also believes that these

¹R.D. Barnett, The Nimrud Ivories, p. 43.

²Mentioned later in connection with the introduction of the female sphinx in Egypt. Gardiner believes that Tiy was an Egyptian Princess, cf. Egypt of the Pharaohs, p. 206.

³H. Frankfort, op.cit., p. 150.

are the masterpieces which "better than anything else, reflect Phoenician style as it was then and was to continue to be for centuries".¹

These metal works reflect in a way the political situation at the time. The safety of the sea and land routes encouraged trade relations between east and west, between the countries on the eastern and southern littoral of the Mediterranean, and between the littoral and the hinterland.

The gold vessels which were found by Chenet and C. Schaeffer in 1933² in a building southwest of the Temple of Baal, were attributed to the Late Ugaritic Period (1450-1365 B.C.). The patera includes two concentric registers. The inner one consists of four wild goats turning around a disk which seems to be supported by their horns, (they seem in fact to have only one horn each). The disk might represent the solar disk, moved by the walk of the goats. The latter were closely related to the goddess of fertility, for they were offered as sacrifice to the gods as mentioned in the Cuneiform Texts of Ras Shamra.³ Henry Frankfort on the other hand thinks that it is a purely decorative design.⁴

The outer register shows a scene of a royal hunt in a chariot. The figure is Syrian in features, wears a long beard,

¹Woolley, Mesopotamia and the Near East, p. 110.

²C. Schaeffer, Ugaritica II, pp. 5-48, Pls. I, II, III, IV, V.

³Ibid., p. 7-11.

⁴H. Frankfort, Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient, p. 151.

and is dressed in a long Syrian tunic with tight sleeves. The chariot with its four spoked wheel is Syrian. The hunter is seen drawing on a bow while the reins are placed around his waist. His attitude is vivid unlike the conventional Egyptian attitude of the pharaoh. The game consists of wild animals including two bulls, a cow and her calf, and a goat. A dog belonging to the king helps in the chase. The Aegeo-Mycenaean influence is found in the flying gallop of the animals. The entire scene is in fact rendered in the artistic formula which was established first by the Minoans and later by the Myceneans. It is a vivid picture full of life and movement. This hunting scene may be compared with the somewhat similar one carved on the ivory gaming board from Enkomi in Cyprus.¹

The gold plate shows the "earliest Syrian example of a theme found throughout the Near East in the Second and First Millennia B.C."² The chariot-hunt was introduced by an Indo-European folk and was propagated by the Mitannians. According to C. Schaeffer the decoration on the patera has a symbolical significance. The king of Ugarit, like Pharaoh, had invested in himself the temporal and spiritual powers. He acted as an intermediary between god and men. It is due to this fact that he is allowed to hunt the wild bull, the sacred animal of the supreme god El and Baal. The wild bull symbolizes the generic

¹H. Frankfort, The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient, p. 152.

²Ibid., p. 152.

force in nature, and this sacred animal can be touched only by a qualified person, the priest-king.¹

The gold cup is more detailed and consists of three registers grouped around a central rosette of 14 petals. It is unnecessary to give a detailed description of the motives found on the cup. However the most important theme in it, seems to be the stylized sacred tree, which is repeated in the three registers. The innermost one reproduces it three times surrounded by five goats. In the second register it is represented four times together with two bulls and two lions. In the third and main register it is found once only. All the other motives here are related in one way or another to this Cypriote palmette as Dr. C. Schaeffer calls it.² He thinks that it has a mythological significance which is directly connected with the Sacred Tree, symbol of fertility and fecundity. The central rosette represents the sun from which derives the animal and vegetal life of the earth. The goat is associated with the Sacred Tree which is related to the goddess of fertility, the nude goddess Ashtarte, who frequently appeared on the gold pendants that were found at Ugarit.³

In the second register, the lions and bulls replace the goats around the Sacred Tree. The bull is the attribute of El and Baal. The latter under the disguise of a bull is

¹C. Schaeffer, Ugaritica II, pp. 19-20.

²Ibid., p. 24.

³Ibid., p. 36, Fig. 10.

followed by Anat' to the prairies in the shape of a heifer.¹ The lion marked with a star on the shoulder, is associated with the nude goddess sometimes wearing a Hathoric headdress, standing on a lion, holding two serpents in her hands.

In the main register, the Sacred Tree is flanked by the female sphinx, attributed to El and the winged lion attributed to his consort Asherat of the Sea.² Behind the sphinx is a squatting griffin watching over her. The scenes on either sides of this central theme show combats between lions and bulls,³ as well as other Egyptian figures struggling with lions.

Besides the mythological value of the cup, we are also interested in the composite nature of the motifs used in its decoration. The Phoenicians used several motifs in their art. The Egyptian influence is seen in the beardless figures attacking the lions, but their action is Mesopotamian in character and can be paralleled on Mesopotamian monuments. The flying leap of the animals is of Mycenaean derivation. The Phoenicians expressed their religious ideas in motifs borrowed from their neighbours and the gold cup in question is one of the finest examples of this hybrid art.

The prosperous period that flourished during the Mitannian era was brought to an end by the onslaught of Shubiluliuma,

¹Syria XVII, 1936, Ch. Virolleaud, "Anat et la Genisse", p. 150 ff

²R. Dussaud, Les Decouvertes de Ras Shamra, p. 52.

³The animal combats will be treated and discussed fully in c. III.

the Hittite king, who moved south about 1360 B.C. and subjugated Syria. The continuous pleas for help from some of the Phoenician cities were left unheeded by their Egyptian protector Akhenaten who was absorbed in his religious fantasies. However when Seti I (1318-1298 B.C.) became king, he reconquered Palestine and Syria, while his son Rameses II (1298-1232 B.C.) concluded a peace treaty with Hattusilis the Hittite king in 1273 B.C. in which he abandoned his claim to the region south of the Lebanon. The influence of the Hittites was not felt in the north as one would have expected, the region north of the Lebanon continued instead to produce the hybrid style which was known during the Mitannian era, while in the south of Syria and Palestine it was still under the Egyptian impact.

With the Twelfth Century B.C. the face of the Levant changed completely because of the coming of the "Peoples of the Sea". New folk arose such as the Phoenicians, when the Aegean race fused with the local inhabitants. The coming of the Aegeans brought Egyptian political supremacy in Phoenicia to an end and gave rise to the Golden Age of the country.

Among the Phoenician sites Byblos was the only one which has been thoroughly excavated so far, but little has been found from the Iron Age to study the Phoenician art of the era. Neither Tyre nor Sidon have provided any clue to the civilization of the Iron Age. Here is where Phoenician ivory-carvings play an important part, for thanks to them and to the bronze works which were found on several sites, we are able

to study the art of the Phoenicians of the First Millennium B.C.¹ The ivories that were found outside Phoenicia in cities such as Samaria in Palestine, Arslan Tash in North Syria and Nimrud in Assyria show affinities in its decoration with the Second Millennium B.C. repertoire, thus establishing a continuity in the craft of ivory carving which apparently was not destroyed by the migration of the "Peoples of the Sea."² Phoenician art of the Iron Age underwent a subtle change since the time of the schools of ivory-carvings of the Fourteenth and Thirteenth centuries B.C. R.D. Barnett describes the art of this age as being "repetitions and largely massproduced, yet technically skillful; the product of commercial minds, yet gay and pleasing."³ While D.C. Baramki defines it as being "nothing but the natural continuation of development of Aegean art. What the Phoenicians had learnt from Egypt and Mesopotamia was not forgotten, but they clothed their lore in a new garb. The assimilation of the various elements which helped to mould Phoenician art gave rise to a new artistic expression which advanced a long way from its proto-types and brought about the creation of an art which was as Phoenician as any murex shell on the coast of Tyre and Sidon."⁴

¹H. Frankfort: Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient, p. 188.

²Ibid: pp. 190-191.

³R.D. Barnett, The Nimrud Ivories, pp. 61-2.

⁴D.C. Baramki, Phoenicia and the Phoenicians, p. 64.

Before ending this chapter, there is one more point which the present writer would like to mention and which will be discussed throughout the Third and Fourth chapters; that is the question of whether the Phoenicians were mere plagiarists copying and borrowing motifs without comprehending them. Dr. R.D. Barnett ventures the suggestion that "native Phoenician ideas would be found illustrated in their figure-scenes".¹ These figure-scenes, which were mainly rendered in Egyptian form, should have had a religious significance since the Art of Ancient Western Asia as a whole is considered as a religious art.²

¹R.D. Barnett, "The Nimrud Ivories and the Art of the Phoenicians", Iraq II, 1935, p. 200.

²G. Conteneau, Manuel d'Archeologie Orientale, Vol. I, p. 355.

C H A P T E R I I

IVORY CARVING: RAW MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

Ivory is a precious material provided mainly by the elephant, and it was, as it still is, used for the making of luxury items such as cosmetic boxes, pins, nicknacks, amulets, jewelry as well as for furniture inlays especially thrones and couches.¹ Moreover ivory figured among the precious tributes of war as is shown by the paintings in the tomb of Rekhmara, and in the Annals of Thothmes III.²

The art of ivory carving in order to develop and flourish, must have access to raw material. The oldest supply of ivory must have come from Egypt. It is enough to mention the ivory handle of the knife from Gebal el Arak which belongs to the Gerzean Period (3400-3200 B.C.), and the ivory objects that were found in the First Dynasty tombs at the Helwan Necropolis on the East bank of the Nile opposite Saqqara in Lower Egypt, to show the importance attached to the material. After roaming in the Nile Valley, the African elephant eventually receded down to the first cataract where the city which was located there was called Elephantine. The hieroglyphic inscription for Elephantine, the Greek name of Abu or Yeb, was

¹I Kings X, 18.

²J.H. Breasted, Ancient Egyptian Records II, 436.

represented by an elephant.¹

It should be noted here that as early as the Old Kingdom, the Canaanites or proto-Phoenicians at Byblos were initiated in the Egyptian ivory-carving school. But the clumsy fabric betrays the Gibelite workmanship, modelled on Egyptian prototypes.²

The development of ivory-carving in this part of the world suggests the idea that local sources provided the raw material. Actual examples were found in several places in North Syria, Palestine and Iraq, among others at Alalakh modern Tell Atchana where tusks, and thigh bones of elephants were found by Sir Leonard Woolley in Levels IV and VII of the Eighteenth Century palace;³ at Ras-Shamra where C. Schaeffer found molars in a ritual enclosure between Tombs V and VI, during the excavations of 1932 which were undertaken at Minet El Beida;⁴ at Megiddo where tusks and an elephant's skeleton were found in the "palace treasury"⁵; at Nimrud, where M.E.L. Mallowan found two tusks during the expedition of 1950.⁶

The elephant which existed in Syria belonged to a subspecies of an Asiatic specimen and must have roamed over the marshes of the Middle and Upper Euphrates; however the earliest

¹Barnett, The Nimrud Ivories, p. 163.

²Montet, Byblos et l'Egypte, p. 94 ff.eg. Lotus flowers, Osiris symbols, (Nos. 236, 241, 246).

³Woolley: Alalakh, p. 102 pl. XVIb.

⁴Syria XIV p. 107.

⁵Loud: Megiddo Ivories p. 7.

⁶Iraq XIV (1952-53) M.E.L. Mallowan "The Excavations at Nimrud 1949-50". p. 48.

written records of this elephant are found in the Ancient Egyptian Records. On his way back from his victory over the Mitannian King, Thothmes I led an elephant hunt¹ at Niy² in order to celebrate his successful expedition in the North. After the eighth campaign of Thothmes III in which he subdued the Mitannian king, the Pharaoh once again like his grand father Thothmes I, celebrated his success by an elephant hunt at Niy with his official Amenemhab who led a campaign there and where "he hunted one hundred and twenty elephants for the sake of their tusks."³ The number which was given by Amenemhab is noteworthy in that it shows us that the region in the North of Syria was full of elephants.

The earliest illustration of the Syrian elephant is found on the walls of the tomb of Rekhmara the visier of Thothmes III. The animal which is represented is of very small size, has a red skin and long tusks.⁴

In the Assyrian records on the other hand, there are many accounts of the Syrian specimen. In the Eleventh Century, during one of his hunting expeditions, Tiglath Pileser I "slew ten bull-elephants in the country of Harran and in the district of the river Habur..." then he "caught four alive, and brought their hides and tusks to Asshur."⁵

¹J.H. Breasted, Ancient Egyptian Records II, 81, 85.

²Niy is thought to be the region which later came to be known as Apamea. A. Gardiner, Egypt of the Pharaohs, p. 179.

³Breasted, op.cit., 588.

⁴R.D. Barnett: Nimrud Ivories p. 164. Fig. 61.

⁵Luckenbill, Ancient Records of Assyria I, 247.

Adad Nirari II (911-891 B.C.) killed six elephants on the rush, cast them into pits and captured four alive.¹ Assurnasirpal I claims to have ambushed thirty and to have placed them in a zoo.² Later on he adds the information³ that he caught them in a pit, and that he received five others from Suhi and Lubda towns on the Euphrates. Tiglath Pileser III (745-727 B.C.) mentions that he received elephant skins and ivories from an unknown North Syrian king.⁴

Elephants seemed to be fairly numerous in the II Millennium B.C. However the later accounts give us a restricted number of elephants, so that we may assume that after the Ninth and Eighth Centuries B.C. the specimen was gradually disappearing from North Syria.

India was another source of ivory to the Phoenicians. This eastern source was already known to Mesopotamia from the Third Millennium B.C. as is actually proved by the discovery at Khafaje of a seal representing an Indian elephant. The Sumerians called it "the wild ox with the finger". From information given by texts from the Larsa Period, (2000 B.C.) it seems that merchants from Ur traded with Telmun (Bahrain) where an entrepôt was centered, probably between India and Mesopotamia.⁵

¹Ibid: 375.

²Ibid: 520.

³On a new found stelae.

⁴Luckenbill, op.cit., 769, f. 772.

⁵Barnett, Nimrud Ivories, p. 167.

On account of the appearance in the Ninth Century Assyria of a new word "piru" which means elephant, and which is of non-Assyrian origin, we must assume that India was another source of ivory at this time. This assumption or theory may be supported by an actual historical fact, namely when Hiram, of Tyre after building the temple of Solomon, was allowed to build up a merchant marine, called in the Bible "ships of Tarshish" at Ezion Geber or modern Elath at the head of the Aqaba Gulf from where it could sail to Ophir, which is still an unidentified place, and whence peacocks, ivory and apes were imported. From the type of the purchased goods it might well be an Indian district. Moreover these "ocean going vessels" could easily travel to India through the Red Sea.

Around the middle of the Second Millennium B.C. or a little later, the art of ivory-carving developed and improved at the hands of the proto-Phoenician Canaanites. A local industry flourished. The similarity existing between pieces from different sites makes us presume that the same people promoted this art, as well as monopolized its production and distribution. It is not yet known where this school was established, or whether it had any branches and if they did exist where they were exactly located, or whether ivory-carvers travelled around and worked for commission.

¹ Ibid., pp. 167-8.

² Frankfort, The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient, p. 154.

There was never found until now a written record alluding to the possible once existing ivory-carvers' guilds in the past. Guilds did exist in Egypt and Asia Minor in pre-Hellenistic times.¹ However an indirect hint of them can be detected in "Hammurabi's Code where the "son of a craftsman" is referred to thus implying that a group or class of craftsmen existed.² Later in the Fourteenth Century B.C., a list of fifty nine cities and sixteen corporations subjected to taxes, is given on a tablet (XI) which was found during the excavations in the winter of 1938-9 directed by C.F.A. Schaeffer at Ras Shamra.³ Much later, in 400 B.C. an inscription found at Kition in Cyprus refers to a man as chief of a guild of brokers.⁴

The guilds of ivory workers were never specially mentioned in ancient texts, except on one occasion where a guild of ivory workers belonging to the Second Century B.C.⁵ mentioned in India as having executed the gateway of Sanchi. The general techniques found in the Phoenician ivory-carvings may be grouped under several headings namely:

¹Rowstowzew, Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World, Vol. III, Notes and Indexes, pp. 1590-1.

²J.H.S. LVIII, p. 2, 1948, Footnote 5.

³Syria, 1940, Charles Virolleaud, "Les Villes et les Corporations du Royaume d'Ugarit", p. 123.

⁴J.H.S. LVIII, p. 2, Footnote 5 refers to Cooke, North Semitic Inscription No. 21.

⁵Ibid., Footnote 5.

1. Sculpture in the round, such as statuettes, persons and animals either isolated or mere parts of furniture, magic sticks, boxes or pyxides in the shape of animals.
2. Sculptured plaques, in low or high relief, or open-work or pierced plaques. This type of ivory usually comes from the inlay of furniture, or wall panellings. To this class belongs a special Egyptionized type of ivory-carving found at Samaria which is called by Crowfoot the "Champleve."¹
3. Incised plaques. These are more common in the Second Millennium, B.C. especially at Megiddo.

Ivory-carvings were usually decorated with gold foil and polychrome insets. The decoration of ivories during the Second Millennium B.C. was not very frequent, because most of the ivory plaques, and especially those from Megiddo were incised. However it was usual for the ivory-carver to use colored insets for the filling of deep grooves (such as eyes and hair locks), and to overlay some parts of the carvings with gold.

The First Millennium B.C. on the other hand witnessed a greater use of decorative elements. Gold foil and polychrome insets were lavishly used on the special Egyptianized type of ivory-carving which was mainly found at Samaria, and later at Nimrud (see plates XV, XVI, XVII, XXVIII, XXIX). The techniques of this class of ivories are related to the cloisonné work which

¹C. Decamps de Mertzfeld: Ivoires Phéniciens, p. 2.

was originally a goldsmith's art, it consisted in applying perpendicularly on a background of ivory, ribbons of gold or silver so as to produce large and small compartments (called cloisons), which were afterwards filled with polychrome insets. The latter consists mainly of enamel, precious and semi-precious stones. This technique is derived undoubtedly from the cloisonné work in precious materials for which Egypt of the Middle kingdom was famous, and whose works of art such as gold pectorals and pendants were either exported to Byblos or imitated by the Gibelite goldsmiths of the time. It even became more widespread when glass was invented in the Seventeenth Dynasty, for precious stones could easily be imitated and used in the decoration of the cloisonné work. This technique was moreover extended to wood work in the Eighteenth Dynasty when glass and paste inlays were largely used for carved coffins, boxes, furnitures and other typically Egyptian objects.¹

The extension of cloisonné work to ivory-carving must have been an idea of the Phoenicians, who were skilled in wood carving as is evident from their work on Solomon's temple. After the Ninth Century B.C. it seemed to have become a common technique as we see from the specially Egyptianized class of ivory, the "Champlevé type", which was only found at Samaria and Nimrud as has been already mentioned above.

¹Barnett: The Nimrud Ivories, p. 156.

The most spectacular pieces of ivory found at Samaria, were wrought in this technique. The small details such as eyes, locks of hair, petals of flowers, wings, rims of dresses were deeply grooved and filled with colored insets. The insets consisted mostly of colored glass and in one or two cases of lapis lazuli. The deeper troughs were often filled with colored paste over which glass was inserted. The ivory left between the incrustations was overlaid with gold foil, while the background and borders were left plain and smooth.

The intention of the ivory-carver was to produce a subject delineated by the colored insets and the gold foils.

To this type of ivory-carving with polychrome insets might be applied the Assyrian word Tamlu or Tam-le-e a class of work which was mentioned by Adad-Nirari III¹ in his inventory of spoils taken from the king of Damascus. Tamlu (filling), meaning filling excavated sockets, while the other class of work mentioned by the same king was ih - zi derived from the word ahazu, (gripping), or filling raised cloisons.

On the evidence of the marks that were left on the works of ivory, R.D. Barnett presumes that saws, drills, picks, files, gravers, gouges, compasses and chisels were used in the craft of ivory-carving. "For most crafts" actually "we are dependent on the evidence to be culled from marks on the backs of art or other similar clues and from scanty references in

¹
Luckenbill I, 740.

ancient authors."¹ Crowfoot on the other hand, mentions the use of a fine scorper in the technique of cloisonné work, as there is no sign of drilling.²

¹R.D. Barnett, The Nimrud Ivories, p. 157.

²Crowfoot. Early Ivories from Samaria p. 9.

IVORY-CARVING DURING THE SECOND MILLENNIUM B.C.

The Proto-Phoenician Canaanites did not develop their imagery on ivory until the second half of the Second Millennium B.C. Ras Shamra, now in Syria, and Megiddo in Palestine are the two sites where important collections of Phoenician ivories were found going back to this period.

A. RAS SHAMRA

During the archaeological campaigns of 1951, 1952 and 1953 which were devoted to the exploration of the palace at Ugarit - Ras Shamra,¹ a very interesting group of ivories was found in one of the rooms in the south wing of the palace. Unfortunately the weight of the debris of the nearby wall crushed the ivories and furniture into small pieces, yet it has been possible to save and retrieve a large number of these. Among the ivories found was a double faced plaque, one meter in length and fifty centimeters in height. It is one of the most important sculptured pieces of ivory discovered so far in the Near East, as it is the largest in size. When first uncovered, the plaque appeared to be in a good condition, but the difficulty lay in the way it had to be removed because it was

¹Syria XXXI, 1954, C. Schaeffer, "Les Fouilles de Ras Shamra-Ugarit, Quinzieme, Seizieme, et Dix-septieme Campagnes, (1951, 1952, 1953). p. 51ff.

badly damaged. The matter was entrusted to Messrs Forrer and Raif Hafez who were sent by Dr. Selim Abdel Haq, Director of Antiquities in Damascus, when he was asked for help. They attended to the problem with extreme care; every piece of ivory was detached from the plaque after it had been photographed and drawn in its place. When the fragments were perfectly dry, they were cleaned and re-stuck with celluloid, exactly as jigsaw puzzles are solved.¹

Each side of the plaque consists of eight rectangular panels, each of which is 24 centimeters in height and 10 to 12 centimeters wide. The panels are held in place by means of a frame of ivory and wood. Two friezes representing animal combats or hunting scenes serve as horizontal borders to the plaque. The lower frieze is duplicated by a band of ivory pieces sculptured in the round representing the Sacred Tree. Ivory rivets hold the panels near the friezes back to back. This double faced plaque must have belonged to a couch, as several legs in the shape of a lion's paw were picked up nearby.

The panels are carved with motifs depicting scenes from the king's personal life and his court, as well as other symbolical designs. The central panel, (Plate I), represents on one side a goddess facing, with the legs shown in profile, wearing an embroidered dress and pressing against her breasts

¹
A.A.S., 1952, p. VII-VIII.

two identical youths or young men wearing short embroidered kilts, who are otherwise naked from the waist up. They tilt their heads backwards in the attitude of sucking. The goddess wears four wings, and two horns which seem to spring out of her forehead; the horns are surmounted by a disk in which may be seen a stylized thunderbolt and stars. Her face with its semitic nose, wide nostrils, slanting eyes and pursed lips shows Asiatic features; while her hair which falls in curls upon her shoulders reminds us of the Hathoric headdress.¹

The theme of this panel is puzzling and has not yet been fully and completely explained. The attitude and attributes of the goddess as well as the presence of the two identical youths are curious. Two questions concerning the twins are raised here: do they represent two minor gods of the Ugaritic Pantheon, or is it only the king himself facing his double? Some suggestions concerning both the goddess and the two youths have been put forward by G. Schaeffer in the first publication of these ivories in Syria.² The author thinks that the deity represented may be related to the goddess Anat, the lover of Baal, god of thunder and storm whose attribute is the bull, and whom Anat as a winged heifer, meets in the prairies.³ Moreover the theme of the goddess

¹Syria XII, 1931, Pl. XIII.

²Syria XXXI, 1954, G. Schaeffer, op.cit., pp. 55-6.

³Syria XVII, 1936, Ch. Virolleaud, "Anat et la Genisse". pp. 150-173.

suckling the god and the theme of adoption¹ were widely represented in Egyptian art during the Fourteenth Century B.C.

The two youths, from a suggestion given to C. Schaeffer by R. Dussaud might represent the king of Ugarit and his double. The spiritual double is actually attested to by the stelae which was found in the temple of Baal in 1932, where the king is placed under the protection of the bull god whose attributes are worn by the goddess on the panel. This central scene might allude indirectly to the spiritual relationship of the sovereign with the god for he is being nursed by the god's consort. The scenes of actuality that frame this symbolical motif establish a connection between the two kinds of representations: the spiritual and actual. However C. Schaeffer reminds us that in Ugaritic iconography the king is always dressed in a long tunic, while the nude torso and the embroidered kilts are restricted to the gods at Ugarit.² It is more logical, however, to consider the two youths as being of divine origin, since when El announces the birth of King Keret's son in one of the Texts of Ras Shamra he predicts that his wife will give birth to the one who is nursed by Virgin Anat. The text says:

"elle enfantera celui qui suce le lait d'Aserat, qui tette le sein de la Vierge Anat."³

¹J. Lectant, "Le role du lait et de l'allaitement d'après les Textes des Pyramides." in J.N.E.S., Vol. X, 1951, p. 123ff.

²Syria XXXI, 1954, C. Schaeffer, *op.cit.*, p. 55.

³Syria XXIII, 1942-3, Ch. Virolleaud, "Le mariage du Roi Keret, poeme de Ras Shamra." p. 147.

Anat and her Mother Asherat-Yam were the nurses of gods and kings. This possibility which makes the two young men of divine descent becomes untenable if we consider this identical representation as having been worked out for symmetrical purposes only.

On the left side of this central panel is seen a princess wearing a long embroidered dress, holding a sceptre in her right hand which ends in a stylized lotus flower, and offering a vase to the goddess with her other hand. The plaque (Pl. II) on the right side represents an intimate scene from the life of the king and queen. They are shown facing each other. The king places his hand on the breast of his wife, while she holds him with one arm, and with the other presents him with some perfume. This type of scene is very rarely represented in the Near East and it reminds us best of the scenes of the private life of Akhenaten. Earlier examples of this intimate pose are known from Old Kingdom sculpture, but the attitude seems rather stiff.¹

Of the other panels, the one on the left side of the central panel has two bearers of offerings : one of them is armed with the bow and holds on his left shoulder a slain doe, and in his right hand carries a beautiful stag. The stag was undoubtedly domesticated and must have served as a bait to attract by its cries the doe that the hunter later killed,

¹C. Aldred, "The Rise of God Kings" in The Dawn of Civilization, p. 116, Pl. 42.

as shown in the scene.¹ Behind the hunter comes an individual carrying a goat with arched horns.

On the right side of the central scene and behind the panel bearing the figure of the queen, an official is portrayed, wearing an Egyptian costume, holding a spear and a royal harpé-dagger over his shoulder. He must have been an officer of the royal guard.

The face of the plaque presents a different aspect of the king's life. Two officers of the royal guard are seen walking and carrying the royal harpé-dagger probably leading the army against the enemy. On another panel (Plate III), there is a representation of the king, wearing the cross-belt and a diadem on his forehead, on the verge of striking an enemy chief. The latter is on his knees in the attitude of supplication, while the unrelenting victor holds him by his long hair, and threatens to put out his eyes with a dagger. This attitude may be compared to the Egyptian representation of the Pharaoh striking his vanquished enemies, which is frequently found in Egyptian monuments.²

Another scene, borrowed from the favorite sport of the king, shows the monarch dressed in a sumptuous costume and wearing a turban on which is set the royal uraeus. The king is thrusting his lance into the neck of a lion which holds its

¹C. Schaeffer, Ugaritica II, p. 27. On the hunting by bait.

²C. Aldred, op.cit., p. 105. King Narmer's Palette.

the Mitannian heritage is found in the royal lion hunt conducted on foot.

During the campaign of 1953, the circular top of a round table or scoop was discovered;¹ it was supported by one central leg. The use of this type of furniture is attested by a similar representation on a stela found in 1935 around which two figures stand, apparently in the act of concluding a pact.² The table in question was found in a fragmentary state. The face of the board was turned against the floor at the time of discovery; the central leg developed into an elegant capital ornamented with stylized leaves but nothing was left of the column shaft; however it is certain that it rested on feet in the form of a lion's paws some of which were found nearby.

The board which has a diameter of 1.07 m. presents the same arrangement of decoration as the gold bowl of Ras Shamra. It is divided into four concentric zones around a big central rosette made of twelve petals.³ The imagery in the circular bands consists mainly of figures of sphinxes and lions standing on either sides of Sacred Trees.

At the end of the 1952 campaign and in the south side of Court III an elephant's tusk was discovered.⁴ It is carved like a horn or trumpet of 60 cms. length. The inside curve of

¹Syria XXXI, 1954, C. Schaeffer, op.cit., pp. 59-62, Figs. 6, 7, 8.

²C. Schaeffer, Ugaritica III, Pl. VI.

³Syria XXXI, 1954, C. Schaeffer, op.cit., p. 60.

⁴Ibid., pp. 62-3, Fig. 9.

the tusk bears the figure of a nude goddess probably Ashtarte, carved in high relief. She is shown facing, with her hands placed under her firm breasts. Her hair falls in a thick plait and is held in four bands ending in several tassels. Two big sphinxes with opened wings stand on either side of the deity in the attitude of a guardian with a rosette incised on their flanks. The goddess and sphinxes stand on a double band in relief filled with godroons with pointed bases. On the lower side of the band, where the carving was damaged by fire, only two heraldic felines can be recognized.

This sculptured hunting horn or "horn of the palace" as C. Schaeffer calls it, was known from early times, and it was called Qeran in the Bible. Its principal use was to announce feasts or to accompany the offerings of sacrifices.¹ This particular piece with the representation of the goddess and the sphinxes must have had a religious significance which has not yet been explained.

From the stratigraphy, archaeological context and pottery, the Fourteenth Century B.C. is proposed as the date of the ivories. This is confirmed by the discovery of a scarab of historical importance which was found among the ivories themselves. The scarabs bear the name of Amenhotep III (1408-1375) and was used to celebrate his marriage to the Mitannian princess Tiy.² The existence of the Egyptian scarab indicates

¹Ibid., p. 63.

²C. Schaeffer, Ugaritica III, p. 221ff, Fig. 204.

that courts and embassies of friendly countries must have been informed of this happy event. The panel as well as the table which was found in the same spot should be attributed to the reign of Amenhotep III or Amenhotep IV who was friendly with the Ugaritic monarchs; in other words to the period which extends between 1400 and 1350 B.C. and known as the Tell-el-Amarna Period.

The Aegean influence was not detected in these ivories in spite of the fact that the western impact was already felt early in the Second Millennium at Ras Shamra, as has already been shown in the Introduction. The Late Helladic III (a) and (b) Period (1500-1200 B.C.) witnessed the greatest expansion of Aegean trade in the Near East. Colonies and commercial centers were established in certain places such as Ras Shamra; markets for Mycenaean goods were opened almost everywhere especially on the coast. The western culture could be detected in the imported objects and the trends borrowed from its artistic repertoires. Traders and craftsmen were the carriers of the western elements to the east, which were absorbed and assimilated by the Asiatic artisans in the late Fourteenth and Thirteenth Centuries B.C.¹

One of the most interesting and most beautiful pieces of ivory-carving that display Aegean characteristics was found in Tomb III at Minet el Beida, the port of Ras Shamra, in 1932.

¹H.J. Kantor. The Aegean and the Orient in the Second Millennium B.C., pp. 84-5.

The presence of many Mycenaean vessels of the Late Helladic III (b) in the tomb with the pyxis lid dates the ivory to the same period, which is roughly contemporary with the reign of Rameses II (1299-1232 B.C.). This relief (Pl. IV) raises the problem of whether it was made by an Aegean or by an Asiatic artisan under strong Mycenaean influence. The description of the ivory inclines more towards western influence. R. Dussaud thinks that the characteristics of the goddess are Aegean: her hair setting is well known from a number of Aegean monuments (frescoes of Tiryns and Knossos and ivories of Isopata): her ample Minoan robe decorated in a purely Aegean fashion recalls the Minoan styles at Knossos in Crete; moreover her profile and smile are not found anywhere on Phoenician monuments.¹ Miss Kantor, on the other hand, thinks that the goddess herself is the Potnia Theron or Mistress of Animals of the Minoan-Mycenaean Pantheon. The Greek goddess appears on seals flanked by heraldic animals,² but on the evidence of one seal the "mother of the Mountains" seal from Knossos³ in which the goddess stands on a mountain the Potnia Theron may be equated to the Great Mother Earth of Asia.⁴

¹R. Dussaud: L'Art Phenicien du Deuxième Millenaire, p. 86.

²Martin P. Nilsson: Minoan Mycenaean Religion and its survival in Greek Religion, Figs. 168, 169, 170, 172, 173.

³Ibid., p. 353, Fig. 162.

⁴H.J. Kantor, The Aegean and the Orient in the Second Millennium B.C., p. 86.

The divinity on the Minet el Beida ivory box cover is seen holding ears of wheat in her raised hands, standing between two goats perched on their hind legs. This theme is very old and may go back to the period of Jamdat Nasr. It was borrowed by Gerzean Egypt where it is detected on the Gebal El Arak flint knife with the ivory handle; in this example a hero is shown subduing two lions, resembling the Mesopotamian "Lord of Beasts" Gilgamesh.¹ In Mesopotamia itself, the idea of a mountain god associated with animals and plants was "apparently a symbolism of the force of fertility supporting vegetal and animal life."² This male deity is substituted by a female deity on our ivory, and the goddess represented here seems to bear a closer relationship to the Mistress of Animals of the Aegean than to her Mesopotamian counterpart, although some individual elements are of purely oriental stamp such as the way the plants are grasped by the goats, and the pose of the two animals. Still it is to be noted that the Potnia Theron is nowhere seen feeding animals on the western monuments,³ moreover, the use of heraldic animals in the Aegean was altogether derived from the Orient.⁴ There are also stylistic differences in the work when compared with Aegean

¹G. Conteneau: Manuel d'Archéologie Orientale, Vol. II, p. 611, Fig. 414.

²H.J. Kantor, op.cit., p. 86.

³Ibid., p. 87.

⁴M.P. Nilsson, op.cit., pp. 382-3.

parallels;¹ for instance the goddess represented on the pyxis is seated in a very clumsy way, her pendulous breasts are different from those on the Mycenaean plaque which are firm and light. The lack of coherence in the representation of the figure, the dress and the legs of the goddess which seem to come in succession, are in contrast to the harmony of perspective with which the Aegean examples were treated.²

The concave altar upon which the goddess sits is Aegean in character and must have penetrated into Asia where it was at least known among the Mycenaean colonies, and "there is no difficulty in assuming that it was known at Ras Shamra where it could have been utilized by an Asiatic craftsman who desired to produce a work of Late Helladic III character". Furthermore Miss Kantor thinks that "this is the most likely explanation for the origin of the Minet el Beida relief, since, despite its close dependence on Mycenaean works it differs from them in many important details. However, it would be rash to claim that this Potnia Theron must have been carved by an Asiatic following western prototypes. The possibility that a Mycenaean migrated to the East, possibly as a young apprentice, and there produced a hybrid carving cannot be disregarded. In any case, whether made by an Asiatic or by an Aegean, comparison with the best Late Helladic III work proves the Minet el Beida relief to be

¹H.J. Kantor, op.cit., Pl. XXII, F, G; pp. 87-8.

²Ibid., p. 88.

a definitely peripheral product."¹

We could briefly say that the divinity is Aegean in appearance, but her action is definitely Asiatic, deriving from a very old theme which goes back to the proto-literate Mesopotamian Period, during which the scale-patterned mountain represented the religious landscape where the god resided and where the "mysterious powers of life which bring forth vegetation in spring and autumn",² were concentrated. The goat is closely associated with the fertility gods as attested by an Akkadian seal impression, in which the herbivore places its forelegs on the god's knee.³

B. MEGIDDO

The Megiddo ivories are a better illustration of the Phoenician art of the Second Millennium because they are more numerous and show a greater variety of themes, motifs and techniques. They were discovered in 1938, when the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago was excavating under the direction of Gordon Loud. The collection was found in what is now called the "treasury" of the final phase of the palace of the Megiddo princes. This three-roomed unit was added to the Stratum VII A Palace, and it must have been under floor level,

¹H.J. Kantor. The Aegean and the Orient in the Second Millennium B.C., p. 89.

²H. Frankfort, The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient, p. 6.

³Ibid., pp. 30-31, Fig. 17A.

because its floor was found to be 1.40 meters below that of the palace proper. This subterranean construction was attached to the rooms on the western side of the central court, and was connected to them through a corridor from which stairs must have led to it.¹ Considering this peculiar arrangement which undoubtedly was prompted by a desire for security, the excavators were inclined to call this unit the "palace treasury" especially that valuable objects, apart from the ivories, were also found there.²

The ivories, when found, were in a most confusing state. Fragments of jewelry and animal bones were mingled with them, and on top of the whole lot lay an animal's skeleton. The ivories were treated very carefully, by applying a celluloid solution to them, and before they were removed they were located exactly on a grid of square meters that was laid over the entire area of the room.³ The ivory palace seemed to have been swept by invaders, but fortunately enough, the ivories were not looted but hadly disturbed.

Before the discovery of the ivories, Stratum VII⁴ was given the date 1350-1200 B.C. on the evidence of pottery which consisted of typically Palestinian types together with imported

¹G. Loud, Megiddo II, p. 29, Fig. 384.

²G. Loud, The Megiddo Ivories, p. 3, 9; jewelry fragments, gold and carnelian beads were found among other things.

³Ibid., p. 7.

⁴The Stratum was divided into A and B phases on the evidence of architectural stratification only. G. Loud, The Megiddo Ivories, p. 9.

Mycenean and Cypriote vessels of the Late Bronze Age III, The presence of a model pen case with the cartouche of Rameses III (1198-1165 B.C.) among the ivories, made the excavators push down the final date to approximately 1150 B.C. for the invasion and destruction of Megiddo is "more likely to have taken place during or after the decline of Rameses III's power."¹ No ivories were made later than 1150 B.C., but as the exact dating of the individual pieces is extremely difficult due to the lack of any inscriptional material or archaeological data, H. Frankfort² thinks that the majority of them belong to the Thirteenth Century B.C. except for a few pieces, among which is a plaque of a Hittite character belonging to the Fourteenth Century B.C. If intended for a Megiddo prince, it could only have been manufactured during Shubililiuma's Syrian campaign (1375-1335 B.C.) or shortly afterwards, for after the reconquest of Palestine by Seti I the presence of something glorifying the Hittite king on Egyptian property would have been compromising.³ Gordon Loud similarly thinks that the plaque must have been carved during the supremacy of Hittite power in North Syria, for if the Hittite power had extended as far south as Kadesh, it was possible that Megiddo was included in their sphere of influence. This influence was cut short when Seti I reconquered the lost

¹Ibid., p. 9.

²H. Frankfort, The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient, p. 156.

³Ibid., p. 156.

territory in the last decades of the Fourteenth Century B.C.¹ From the historical point of view the first phase of the palace was probably built after the conquest of Palestine by Thothmes III, and when this part of the world enjoyed a period of peace and prosperity during which the Princes of Megiddo were able to put up a palace worthy of them. This royal residence was re-used and re-built through the following phases down to Rameses III. From the archaeological point of view the ivories should be attributed to the later period of Rameses III, but the presence of earlier pieces, such as the Hittite plaque, automatically assigns the collection to the two earlier centuries 1350-1150 B.C.²

The Megiddo ivories include combs, boxes for cosmetics, plaques that were probably parts of pieces of furniture such as chairs, couches, tables and rest-beds, statuettes,³ etc...

The magic stick which was mostly used by women seemed to be very popular at the time.⁴ Two examples which are particularly interesting in their meaning and design were found at Megiddo. One of them (Pl. V:2) is flat and shows a succession of incised motifs. A figure with the limbs terminating in uraeii, then a second figure, may be Bes, holding two snakes, followed by a griffin with open wings and a cat standing on its

¹Melanges Syriens, Vol. II, G. Loud, "The Hittites at Megiddo ?", pp. 557-8.

²Ibid., pp. 557-8.

³As it is impossible for me to describe the 300 pieces of ivory found at Megiddo, I have chosen the most outstanding pieces only.

⁴R. Dussaud: L'Art Phenicien du II^e Millenaire, p. 92.

hind legs carrying a knife. The scene ends with a turtle. On the back of the wand there is a hieroglyphic inscription which claims the protection of these magic creatures on the lady of the house Btmmw, which is not an Egyptian name but can be translated as Bat' Aumon, daughter of the God Aumon.¹ The motifs represented on the stick, are almost all borrowed from the Egyptian repertoire except for the griffin which was known in Mesopotamia before it entered Egypt,² and the deity with the four uraeii, which may be a variation of a similar but unknown god who was engraved several times on Hyksos scarabs, standing with either an arm or a leg ending in a snake.³ The griffin with the slender body and the collared neck may be compared to that found on the gold cup from Ras Shamra. Between its opened wings can be seen the lower part of a face, probably a representation of the owner of the stick.

The imagery here corresponds to that which is represented on almost 60 magic sticks from Egypt and dated to about the middle of the Old Kingdom. The objects were used by women in order to drive away evil spirits. Their purpose is further confirmed by the mere fact that the apotropaic god Bes is included in the design.⁴

¹C. Decamps de Mertzzenfeld, Ivoires Phénicien, p. 6.

²G. Conteneau, Manuel d'Archeologie Oriental, Vol. II, p. 630, Fig. 434.

³C. de Mertzzenfeld, op.cit., p. 6.

⁴Ibid., pp. 7-9.; H. Frankfort, The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient, pp. 156-7; Syria XIX, 1938, C. de Mertzzenfeld, "Les Ivoires de Megiddo". p. 348.

The second example (Pl. VI, a,b,c,d,) is a bar,¹ rectangular in section, which is carved on four sides in low relief with several different motifs. On one of the sides (a) a hunting scene is depicted. A kneeling figure (similar to that encountered on the seals of Chagar Bazar and Ras Shamra) draws a bow, and seems to be aiming at two gazelles or ibexes which are running wildly to take refuge in a mountainous landscape, while immediately in front of him, are two other ibexes confronting each other. The design on the second face (b) shows three superimposed figures all having Asiatic features with the typical wide nose, slanting eyes and pursed lips. The first one from the bottom has been suggested to be the supreme god, El.² He is unbearded, and wears a curious headdress provided with one horn, possibly an uraeus, which is pointed at the front. He is dressed in the long dotted tunic over a similar folded dress. The so-called El stands on a mountain, which is represented by a heap of pellets. The next figure who is also unbearded is dressed in the fringed kilt held in place with a belt and holds a thunderbolt over his left shoulder. The headdress he wears is a copy of that generally worn by the queens and princesses of the New Kingdom in Egypt.³ C. Decamps de Mertenfeld describes the headdress as being composed of the bird folding its wings in front of its

¹H. Frankfort thinks that this object was probably part of a piece of furniture. op.cit., p. 158.

²C. de Mertenfeld, Ivoires Phéniciens, p. 6.

³Ibid., p. 7; C. Schaeffer, Ugaritica III, Figs. 172, 173, 174, 175.

face, yet this creature cannot be detected here because of the adjoining horns and other protuberances which make the whole appear like a palmette.¹ According to her, this figure represents a male deity which it would be too daring to identify with Mot, the spirit of Harvest.² Henry Frankfort on the other hand, says that the middle figure is a "travesty of the pharaoh or of Osiris who wears the Atef crown with the royal cobra and the shepherd's crook which was an ancient attribute of Egyptian royalty."³ The last figure is badly damaged however one may still see his conical hat; he holds a haft in his hand, and wears a short kilt. He is thought to be the Baal of Ras Shamra,⁴ although the horn cannot be distinguished on the headdress due to the damaged state of the plaque at this point.

The two other sides of the stick show (c) a combat scene between two lions and two bulls in a forest and, (d) a lion devouring a gazelle, while on the other side of a nearby tree are four other gazelles which are seated peacefully, but with their ears pricked at the feeling or sense of danger.

This stick seems to bear a religious significance which is possibly related to the Mythology of Ras Shamra.

¹C. de Mertenfeld, op.cit., p. 83.

²R. Dussaud, Les Decouvertes de Ras Shamra, p. 103.

³Frankfort, The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient, p. 158.

⁴C. de Mertenfeld, op.cit., p. 7.

A direct device connecting the stick with the myths of Ras Shamra is the combat between the lions and the bulls. The combat scene was one of the most favourite themes of Western Asia in the Third Millennium B.C.¹ R. Dussaud mentions, in connection with the combat scene, the series of shells that were found in the tombs at Ur which according to him explain their religious value. Some of these shells represent goats standing on their hind legs on either side of a Sacred Tree, while others depict goats which are being devoured by lions. One of the shells bears a star which is probably the symbol of Inanna, or Ishtar the great goddess of nature in Mesopotamia. Furthermore Dussaud thinks that the propagation of this theme to the west and down to later periods is due to its religious significance.²

The combat between lion and bull denotes a ritualistic symbolism; the best example of it is found on the gold cup of Ras Shamra, where the sacred tree, or the vegetative forces of nature, are symbolical of the intervention of the struggle between the seasons, a theme frequently found in the Texts of Ras Shamra. The animals, struggling and destroying each other, is a theme which is related to the Phoenician conception of the succession of the seasons which result from combats between the gods, and the victory of one god over the other.³ The consecutive

¹G. Conteneau, Manuel d'Archeologie Orientale, Vol. I, Figs. 287, 288, 289, 291, and p. 381-2.

²R. Dussaud, L'Art Phenicien du IIo Millenaire, pp. 96-7.

³R. Dussaud, Les Decouvertes de Ras Shamra, pp. 51-2.

associations between stars and gods, and gods and beasts, constituted a frame of development in which the change of seasons took place. "When the stars waxed and waned" in the astrological jargon, "the seasons rotated in their course".¹ The Phoenicians symbolized this heavenly contest by the struggle between the beasts that are respectively attributed to the deities concerned.

The ivory from Byblos which was found in the sarcophagus of Ahiram² is another contemporary example representing a lion and a griffin ravaging a bull. Belonging to the same group of subjects is the ivory comb (Pl. VII, 1) of the Megiddo collection. The shape of the comb, which is concave on one side is frequent in Egypt and is dissimilar to the Greek parallels which are rectangular. The scene consists of an ibex collapsing under the attacks of a dog. This particular example is noted for its style of design and may be compared to the Athens pyxis and the pyxis lid from Menidi.³ The collapsing or falling poses of the animals, called "folded poses" by H.J. Kantor, are typical of the Late Helladic III Period on the Greek mainland where by that time, the canons of naturalistic representations which had developed in Crete, were completely acclimatized.⁴

¹R.D. Barnett, "Phoenicien and Syrien Ivory Carving".
P.E.Q. 1939, p. 11.

²H. Frankfort, op.cit., Pl. 149A ; Montet, Byblos et l'Egypte, p. 220 ff.

³H.J. Kantor, The Aegean and the Orient in the Second Millennium B.C. Pl. XXIII, Pl. XXIV, B.

⁴Ibid., p. 92.

The flying gallop, and flying leap are also characteristic of the Aegean representative art of the Late Helladic III which is noted for its feeling for motion. The appearance of this feature on the Asiatic mainland recurs on many objects,¹ amongst others the ivory gaming board from Enkomi dated to the Late Cypriote III. This influence is also found in the vivid representation of the gazelles on the ivory stick found at Megiddo (Pl. VI, a,d). The folded graceful pose of the animals are also found on the doublecomb incised with two scenes of ibexes seated between trees (Pl. VII, 2).

There seems to exist a connection in purpose and use, and not in shape, of the ivory magic sticks which were mentioned above and the objects in the shape of a horn, which are terminated in a feminine head. The discovery at Byblos of a similarly shaped horn ending with the head of Bes,² the apotropaic god par excellence, sustains the supposition. On the other hand, they are comparable to similar objects that were found in the tombs of high officials or represented on the wall paintings of the New Kingdom tombs, at Thebes.³ The example which was found at Megiddo (Pl. V:1) is sculptured in the head of a woman possessing a pointed nose and pursed lips. Her flat tiara which is decorated with leaves covers the hair which

¹Ibid. A list of objects is given by Miss Kantor on pages 92, 93.

²Montet, Byblos et l'Egypte, Pl. CLXV.

³Montet, Les Reliques de l'Art Syrien, pp. 48-9, Figs. 37, 38, 39, 41, 42.

falls into two twisted curls on either side of the face, while the mass of it undulates freely at the back of the head. These curls are important in the Syrian coiffure,¹ and will be found later in the nude figurines of the Syrian ivories which were found by Loftus in the palace at Nimrud.

The same tiara recurs on the beautiful nude statuette (Pl. VIII) carved in the round, which was unfortunately damaged and from which only the back is left. The hands, as it appears from what has been preserved, seem to have rested under her breasts in the usual attitude of the goddess Ashtarte. This piece of ivory is outstanding in that it denotes a delicate rendering of design as well as the right proportions for a figure.

Ashtarte is also represented by the four Hathorique heads² from Megiddo. The headdress consists of a wig with a middle parting, from which originate thick plaits of hair. These plaits are drawn behind the ears and then they fall in large volutes on the breast in the form of an S. The heads in question must have been parts of the representations of the goddess. They are of the same type of figurine of the image of Ashtarte that were found on most Phoenician and Palestinian sites.³

¹C. de Mertzfeld, Ivoires Pheniciens, pp. 4-5.

²G. Loud, The Megiddo Ivories, Pl. 44 Nos. 190, 191, 192, 193.

³Dussaud, Les Decouvertes de Ras Shamra, p. 57, Fig. 22; C. Schaeffer, Ugaritica II, Fig. 10.

Bes

The God Bes was, besides Ashtarte, one of the most popular deities in the Ancient Western Orient. Many representations of this god on baked clay and stone were found in Phoenicia.¹ He usually appears with very short legs, a swollen tummy, and curved arms; he is always bearded, bearing a funny looking expression on his face, with a pendent tongue and a large nose, and frequently wears a headdress which resembles a diadem of plumes or palm branches. His most current attitude is that where he poses with his hands resting upon his flexed knees, and with a tail between his legs.

The apotropaic part that was played by Bes in Phoenicia since the Second Millennium B.C. is best illustrated by his representations on the ivories of Megiddo. The open-work panel which is illustrated (Pl. IX, 1) represents a lion-headed Bes wearing a short kilt held at the waist with a large belt, which hangs down and touches the ground. He seems to be licking an elongated object which he holds with his right hand; his left hand rests on a similar thing that reminds us of the symbolical knot on which the goddess Thoueris leans.

The Bes of our panel is winged and wears a headdress consisting of three palm branches.

Another representation of Bes is found in one compartment of a composition in three registers.² He stands facing

¹G. Conteneau: Là Civilization Phénicienne, p. 160.

²R. Dussaud, l'Art Phénicien du II^e Millenaire, p. 104, Fig. 66.

bare headed, with two snakes coming out of his mouth, and posing in his usual attitude with the tail between the legs. He has four wings, two coming out of his shoulders, and two others from his waist. René Dussaud sees in this an Egyptian representation in which a racing Bes is shown taming snakes.¹ Bes is a grotesque figure associated with dance and music. However his terrifying appearance drove the evil spirits away. He is mentioned among the gods foreign to Egypt. Nevertheless being of Semitic or African origin does not preclude the fact that he was very popular in Egypt for his numerous qualities.

Bes also watches over the birth and life of individuals as attested by the lowest register of the relief in the famous temple of Hatshepsut at Deir el Bahri, where he appears in the room where the queen was to be born.² He is the protector of children, for his mask is worn by the infant god Horus on the stelae of his birth; however the figure of the god Shu, dressed in a short kilt and wearing a feathered headdress, is disguised in the Bes mask. Shu is the "god of the flames" by which he saves Horus from the evil spirits that mean to harm him, the enemies of Horus being Seth and his allies for "the power of Seth disappears when it sees the flame".³ The monstrous dwarf Bes, the good natured spirit figured on Egyptian couches and bedside tables. In the Amarna Period he was shown beating a

¹Ibid., p. 93.

²Budge, The Gods of the Egyptians, p. 285; Syria XIX, 1936, C. de Mertenfeld, "Les Ivoires de Megiddo", p. 349.

³Syria XIX, 1938, C. de Mertenfeld, op.cit., p. 349.

drum on the blue glazed pendants which women used to wear. Bes was similarly represented on the necklaces that were worn by the four women carved on one of the small sides of the sarcophagus of Ahiram of Byblos. The god here was supposed to drive away the evil spirits from the soul of the dead king.¹

This god, whether of Semitic or African origin,² was readily and gladly accepted in the Egyptian and Asiatic religious and artistic repertoires. The conception of his physical monstrosity did not seem to create a horrid impression on the ancient folk; they were instead attracted to him, and their strong belief in him is shown by the numerous and abundant representations in which he is included.

The love of the people for fantasy and fantastic creatures is further confirmed by the presence of griffins and sphinxes in their artistic repertoires.

The question of the griffin's origin is still uncertain.³ It was already frequently represented on the Sumero-Akkadian seals in Mesopotamia⁴ during the Third Millennium B.C. However according to R.D. Barnett the griffin as well as the winged sphinx originated ultimately in Syria, where they were already included in the Syrian school of glyptic art which flourished in the Nineteenth and Eighteenth Centuries B.C.⁵ This Syrian

¹Syria XI, 1930, R. Dussaud, "Les Quatres Campagnes de Fouilles de P. Montet", pp. 182-3.

²Budge, The Gods of the Egyptians, p. 284.

³H. Frankfort, "Notes on the Cretan Griffin", A.B.S.A., Vol. XXXVI, 1936-7, pp. 106-122.

⁴G. Conteneau, Manuel d'Archeologie Orientale, Vol. II, p.631.

⁵R.D. Barnett, The Nimrud Ivories, p. 37.

griffin wears usually a collar around the neck as it appears on the cylinder seal which was found in a tomb in the Lebanon and dated to the Period of Amenemhat III,¹ on the gold cup from Ras Shamra and on the ivory magic stick from Megiddo (1350-1150 B.C.) (See Plate V, 2).

The griffin was introduced into Greece around the Middle Minoan III Period where it acquired certain Aegean characteristics the most outstanding detail of which is the crest.² The modelling of the head, the straight-edged feathers and the spiral curled wings of the Megiddo griffin (Pl. X, 1) are paralleled by those represented on the ivory pyxis from Athens.³ While his couchant position, his opened wings and the powerful rendering of the legs are closely related to the female sphinx carved on a rectangular plaque found at Mycenae.⁴

The long beaked crested griffin in Egypt appears first on the gold axe of Ahmes I, the founder of the Eighteenth Dynasty,⁵ and thus became frequent in the New Kingdom.

This fantastic animal must have had a symbolical and mythological meaning. R. Dussaud identifies the griffin of the gold cup of Ras Shamra with Baal the god of thunder and storm.⁶

¹M. Chehab, "Un Tresor d'Orfèvrerie Syro-Egyptien", B.M.B., Vol. I, 1957, P. 11, Fig. 3.

²A.T. White, Les Grandes Decouvertes de l'archeologie, Pl. 9.

³H.J. Kantor, The Aegean and the Orient in the Second Millennium B.C., Pl. XXIII, 2.

⁴Ibid., footnote 83 refers to ArtC p. 38, Fig. 56, a and b.

⁵Montet, Les Reliques de l'Art Syrien, pp. 172-173.

⁶R. Dussaud, Les Decouvertes de Ras Shamra, p. 52.

R.D. Barnett on the other hand believes that the combat between a bull and a griffin is a mythological theme.¹ The argument is mentioned in connection with an ivory from the Loftus collection which was found at Nimrud, and with which the present writer is not concerned because it belongs to a Syrian school of ivory-carving. However the interest here does not lie in the workmanship but in the subject of the griffin. The mere fact that the animal is included in a combat with another animal, (the other animal being either a bull or a lion) is in itself a suggestion that the griffin is automatically taking part in the symbolical theme of the succession of the seasons, which has been already discussed in the foregoing pages. Moreover the association of the griffin with the Sacred Tree on the ivories of the Layard group of the Eighth Century B.C. supports its mythological and ritualistic conception.²

The sphinx which is an Egyptian creation appears in Syria as early as the Eighteenth Century B.C. on Syrian or Syro-Hittite seals which have already been mentioned above.³ Egypt of the Middle Kingdom, especially of the Twelfth Dynasty, must have influenced Syria through which it could get in contact with Mesopotamia. The sphinx which reached North Syria without wings, must have been affected by the winged griffin, and thus started to appear as such in Syria.

¹R.D. Barnett, The Nimrud Ivories, p. 72.

²This association of the griffin and the Sacred Tree will be treated in C. IV.

³R.D. Barnett, The Nimrud Ivories, pp. 36-7.

Around the Middle Minoan III Period the female sphinx appeared in Crete where it was assimilated and whence it acquired certain Aegean characteristics of which the most important feature is the long plumed crown.¹ In Egypt the winged sphinx does not occur before the New Kingdom.²

The female sphinx of the open-work panel at Megiddo (Pl. IX, 2) has the figure of a lioness with four udders and is represented in the couchant position with a raised tail which draws a knot and touches the wings. The latter are seen in profile and are shown in the Asiatic tradition of superposing the two slightly opened wings. She wears the broad Syrian collar and holds a vase between her hands placed on a stand in front of her; it is covered by a cone which is divided into two equal parts by a vertical line in the middle. Her headdress consists of a palmette surmounted by three lotus flowers. "This female sphinx" says D. Mertzfeld "is impregnated with the sickly refinement of the Tell-el-Amarna Period", around 1350. The lines that are drawn beneath the animal are an Egyptian convention which usually denotes a mat, and may be compared to a similarly wrought sculpture that was generally given as a gift to the pharaohs on New Year's Day, or placed in his temple on other occasions where the sovereign's personification of the superhuman power in the sphinx wearing the royal crown offers

¹H.J. Kantor: The Aegean and the Orient in the Second Millennium B.C., pp. 90-91.

²P. Montet: Les Reliques de l'Art Syrien, pp. 110-111.

³G. de Mertzfeld, Ivoires Phéniciens, p. 9.

to the god or goddess concerned the objects he is holding between his hands. The Megiddo example differs from the Egyptian proto-type in its female sex and its headdress.¹

The latter type of the female sphinx appears in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties in Egypt; it is always wearing the Syrian round collar or medallion ornamented in its middle with a chrysanthemum. However its use in Egypt may be traced back to the Eighteenth Dynasty from an example carved in a gem with the name of Amenhotep III, thus making it earlier than the Asiatic examples. Its appearance in Egypt at that time could be explained by the coming of Mitannian princesses who must have brought the female sphinx to Egypt with them in the late Fifteenth Century B.C. and where they started being represented as such in contrast to their consort, the pharaoh, whose image was the male sphinx.²

Another piece of capital interest is the squared ivory box (Pl. XI) which is carved in high relief with sphinxes and lions. According to D. Mertzenfeld this box is a landmark between Phoenician art and North Syrian art underlining and emphasizing their close relation.³ The standing female sphinxes are vigorous in style and are related to the later sphinxes with ram's heads of the Arslan Tash ivories. The lions on the other

¹H. Frankfort, The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient, p. 157.

²Montet, Les Reliques de l'Art Syrien, p. 173, Fig. 200; H. Frankfort, op.cit., pp. 157-8.

³C. de Mertzenfeld, op.cit., p. 10.

hand are more Syrian in style, the head of the lion which is not very menacing reminds one of the lion's gate at Malatya.¹ The combination here of both the female sphinxes and the lions reflects a Phoenician symbolical conception. The Phoenicians particularly attributed the sphinx to the goddess Ashtarte.² The Phoenician Ashtarte had its counterpart in the Babylonian Ishtar whose symbol was the lion. This fantastic creature underwent a profound change of meaning when it changed its habitat. In Egypt it originally represented the "Horus in the Horizon" during the Old Kingdom. He was given several names throughout the history of Egypt down to the coming of the Arabs.³ He also personified the superhuman power of the pharaoh. There is no doubt that the sphinx was born in Egypt and was borrowed by the neighbouring countries, where he underwent certain modifications in appearance and meaning. The oldest appearance of this radically changed sphinx in Asia, might have been the griffin, the creature with the body of the lion, and head and wings of a bird which occurred on a cylinder seal from Susa around 3000 B.C.⁴ In the long run the Asiatic sphinx acquired certain physical characteristics and became part of the Pantheon of certain countries representing certain deities or deity.

¹H. Frankfort, op.cit., pp. 128129, Pl. 133A.

²R. Dussaud; L'Art Phénicien du II^e Millénaire, p. 93.

³S. Hassan; Le Sphinx, p. 81.

⁴G. Conteneau, Manuel D'Archeologie Orientale, Vol. I, p. 395, Fig. 295.

Besides the representations of these isolated figures which are generally associated with the Canaanite or Phoenician mythological figures, the Phoenician ivory carvers produced a series of long plaques incised with scenes that are drawn from the real life of the prince of Megiddo. These plaques must have come from a casket or a little chest, to which they were probably attached by rivets as it appears from the small holes on them.

The plaque on Plate XII presents two episodes in the king's life. The scene on the left depicts the glorious return of the king from war. The sovereign stands upright in a chariot drawn by horses, and holds the reins and a leash, in his hands; a footman carrying the royal harpé walks behind him, while in front are two nude prisoners walking with bound hands and preceded by a warrior, wearing a short kilt and holding a round shield in his right hand and a long spear in his left. The next scene seems to be separated from the first by the three superimposed plant decorations. The king is now seated on a throne with a high back and sphinx-like sides, and raises a cup to his lips with his right hand; in front of him stands the queen wearing an embroidered dress and a flat turban which is similar to that of the nude goddess on Plate VIII. She is holding a lotus flower in one hand and extending a piece of cloth to the king with which to wipe his lips. Behind her comes a woman playing a portable lyre; she is dressed in the same long tunic of the queen but with plain fringes. Behind the throne are two servants wearing long tunics and standing near a big jar

full of offerings, related to that carved on one of the long sides of the sarcophagus of Ahiiram of Byblos,¹ where the same type of throne may be seen, and the same low stool on which the king places his feet. The scene on the sarcophagus has a cultic funerary significance. The deceased king, who is holding the inverted lotus flower,² a sign of death, is sitting on a sphinx-like throne and is approached by living mourners. The man on our ivory plaque is holding an upright lotus flower which is a sign of life, and is approached by lively people. The "Processions to a seated figure" as R.D. Barnett calls them, are themes found in both Egyptian and Mesopotamian ancient art, "but whereas in Egypt especially in the New Kingdom, it became popular for representations of daily life, for example, to show in tomb paintings a parade of a noble man's serfs, exhibiting to him his harvest, in Mesopotamia, Syria, Iran and Anatolia it was usually given a religious meaning."³ These processions usually approached gods or goddesses seated on a throne, or gods and princes representing the deities concerned. The sanctity of the thrones is derived from the representation of the divinity standing or sitting on the back of its animal attribute which was gradually abbreviated to the appearance of a throne or footstool. The Phoenicians chose to incorporate the sphinx in these so-called

¹G. Conteneau: La Civilisation Phenicienne, Pl. XI.

²Syria XI, 1930 R. Dussaud: "Les Quatres Campagnes de Fouilles de M.P. Montet á Byblos" p. 182. The Phoenicians adopted the lotus flower from the Egyptians and gave it significance: if upright the person holding it is alive, if downward the person is dead.

³R.D. Barnett, The Nimrud Ivories, p. 78.

sacred thrones,¹ but did they mean to represent a religious or cultic scene on the ivory? The Phoenician artists on the other hand seemed to have contributed to the subject by "converting the motif of the procession to a seated figure into a musical and sacrificial procession."²

A similar type of scene incised on an ivory plaque was found by Sir Flinders Petrie at Tell el Fara south east of Gaza, who attributed it to the Eighteenth Dynasty Period (1580-1320 B.C.).³ The seated person, probably an Egyptian provincial governor wears a long folded dress, holds a cup in one hand and an upright lotus flower in the other. The female figure standing in front of him holds also a lotus flower and a flask. An attendant stands behind the seated person. On the opposite side and behind the queen, a nude figure is seen dancing to the sound of a flute which is played by another person coming after it. At first glance the scene appears to be Egyptian: the throne, the costumes are Egyptian. But a closer examination of the details uncover its Phoenician origin. The Phoenician palmette, which will be treated in greater details later, and more particularly the related attitude of the figures and their expressive facial features depart from the stiff Egyptian conventions and are more in favor of the Aegean vividness

¹These sphinxes whether males or females were called cherubs by the Hebrews.

²R.D. Barnett, op.cit., p. 78.

³Melanges Syriens, C. de Mertenfeld, "Ivoires Syriens", pp. 587-591, Fig. 1.

which was adopted by the Phoenician artists. This habit of the ivory-carvers to render more than one episode on one ivory plaque, or on a series of plaques,¹ was also practiced by the Phoenician goldsmiths of the First Millennium B.C. in their works on metals. The best example of these were found at Preneste and Palestrina in Italy. The Phoenicians converted a small story into images; this was done by the repetition of actors to express the succession and variety of acts.²

The ivory plaques under discussion are culturally and historically interesting. The scene of the Megiddo plaque obviously represents the homecoming of the city lord from a successful battle over his enemies. The latter are brought naked into the city where they are probably paraded in front of the citizens in order to humiliate them and make them look derisive. Moreover these prisoners appear to belong to the same ethnic group which the king, queen, and attendants belong. The battle is undoubtedly fought against local people, perhaps a feud with another local overlord in Palestine. After parading them for some time in the public place of the city, the prisoners are probably led to a prison, while the king returns to his palace to celebrate his victory. The sovereign, who was considered as a sacred person, sits on a sacred throne and is

¹G. Loud: The Megiddo Ivories, on Plates 32 and 33 are found reconstructions of four long rectangular plaques on which are carved (1) a battle scene, (2) the return of the king from war, (3) Procession to the seated figure of the king, (4) A family celebration.

²Clermont-Ganneau, L'Imagerie Phenicienne.

served by his wife in the presence of attendants who bring presents and gifts to the victorious king. Barnett calls the main female figure a priestess, and on account of her action and her headdress he concludes that the native cults of Phoenicia are closer to the persisting Mesopotamian cultures than to the superficial Egyptian influences.¹ On the other hand, the Tell el Fara ivory plaque is more akin in its general appearance to Egypt than to Mesopotamia, although when more closely inspected it betrays its Phoenician workmanship. The technique of incision, which is actually found on both plaques, does not derive from Egypt where it was rarely found. The origin of this technique should be sought in the centers where it was practiced on metals in ancient Mesopotamia.²

Among the great collection of ivories found at Megiddo and not necessarily belonging to the Phoenician workmanship is a curious and unique squared plaque (Pl. XIII) which is carved with the glorification of a Hittite king who may be, according to René Dussaud either Shubililiuma or Mursilis I.³ The plaque is divided into five registers. In the first register from the bottom there are four bulls standing on a mountain, two confronting each other, and two turning towards the exterior. On both ends of the second register there are two squatting female sphinxes heads facing, and wearing the Hathoric headdress

¹R.D. Barnett, "Phoenician and Syrian Ivory Carving", P.E.Q., 1939, p. 8.

²Ibid., pp. 7-8.

³R. Dussaud, L'Art Phoenicien du II^e Millenaire, p. 104.

Between them are two identical groups each composed of two bearded genii of the mountain flanked by two female genii with a Hathoric headdress and two horns coming out of their forehead. These two groups extend their arms upward and hold up the next register. The third register depicts a central figure whose bust emerges from a cylindrical motif decorated with wavy lines. This figure is flanked on either side by two genii and a squatting winged human headed sphinx wearing a pointed turban from which springs the long curled ribbon. From the breast protrudes another human head. The figures between the middle one and the two sphinxes hold up the fourth register with their uplifted arms. The fourth register bears the figure of an Enkidu standing and holding on his outstretched arms the last register, with the help of other genii. The top compartment shows two kings standing under the Hittite winged disk held by four two-headed figures wearing short kilts.

This delicately carved ivory plaque is Hittite in subject and design, but might have been produced at Megiddo under strong Hittite influence, probably during the period when the northern influence was strong, that is sometime after the conquest of Syria and Palestine by Shubililiuma in the Fourteenth Century B.C. The king standing beneath the sun-disk is paralleled by a procession of gods found on a set of reliefs carved in the rock in the open air sanctuary at Yazilikaya, North East of Boghaz Keuy the capital of the Hittites.¹ In the same

¹Melanges Syriens, Vol. II, G. Loud, "The Hittites at Megiddo", pp. 557-8; H. Frankfort, The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient, p. 124, Pl. 130; A, B; Pl. 131 B.

reliefs are gods uplifted by figures. The double-headed figures find prototypes on Hittite seals¹ and the double-headed sphinx is similar to those at Carchemish, while the squatting sphinx wearing the pointed cap and from whose breast protrudes a head is found on a gold signet ring of Hittite imperial times.² However some details are Syrian in character such as the scattered rosettes in the background of the composition, the bull-men, the emerging from a cylindrically shaped mountain are all paralleled on Syrian seals.³ The non-Hittite workmanship is further betrayed by several non-Hittite characteristics such as the short kilt, which appears under the long tunic, while the confronted bulls in the lowest register find parallels on those carved on the ivory plaque which was found at Lachish (modern Tell ed Dweir)⁴ as well as on Syrian seals.⁵

The plaque, as we have seen, bears Hittite and Syrian designs, but "it is impossible to say whether the Hittites derived these motifs from a Syrian repertoire, or whether the Syrians used them under Hittite influence."⁶ In any case the plaque was locally made, probably by a Phoenician artisan who was known for his skill in ivory-carving.

¹H. Frankfort; Cylinder Seals, Fig. 92.

²Frankfort: The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient, p. 131.

³Frankfort: Cylinder Seals, Pls. XLII (k), XLIV (j), (l).

⁴R. Dussaud, L'Art Phénicien du II^e Millénaire, Fig. 65.

⁵H. Frankfort, Cylinder Seals, Pl. XLII (h).

⁶H. Frankfort, "The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient", p. 131.

Decorative motifs.

The decorative motifs on the Megiddo ivories include both floral and geometrical designs. The floral decorations occur either separately or associated with animals or human figures. In the latter case, where they are represented as elements of a landscape, they appear in their most naturalistic forms.¹ When found alone, the motifs appear in a stylized shape and are usually carved on long plates which probably served as borders for a frieze of a wooden or an ivory panel, the latter being included in the composition of a piece of furniture. Among the representations of floral motifs which occur separately are the Egyptian djed symbol,² the lotus flower,³ the pomegranate,⁴ the rosette and the palmette. The rosette as it occurs on the round pyxis lid, (Plate X, 2) is related to the fertility cult. The four goats associated with it, seem to be rotating around it in a circular movement. The theme itself reminds one of the similar but earlier motif found on the gold bowl from Ras Shamra. The rosette with the eight petals represents the sun, the light and warmth of which are essential to agriculture. The goats which usually flank a Sacred Tree are here associated with another item also important in the whole process of agriculture.

¹G. Loud, The Megiddo Ivories, Pl. 17, Nos. 110c,b,d; Pl. 47, No. 220. Pl. 51, No. 225b.

²Ibid., Pl. 37, Nos. 171-2; Pl. 36, Nos. 168-9.

³Ibid., Pl. 21, No. 124b; Pl. 20, No. 123c.

⁴Ibid., Pl. 10, No. 43.

The Phoenician or Cypro-Phoenician palmette is a decorative stylized motif deriving from the Mesopotamian palm tree. Agriculture had a vital importance in Ancient Mesopotamia especially at Sumer whence an agricultural religion developed in which all the gods were in one way or another associated with fertility and fecundity. The palm tree was one of the primary resources of this region, but whereas in Sumer it had a definite utilitarian significance, it is possible that it was adopted as a Sacred Tree by people to whom it did not have the same utilitarian importance, but who were on the other hand influenced by the Sumerian civilization.¹

The Sacred Tree which was considered as a symbol of fertility and fecundity in the earlier periods, acquired gradually a prophylactic value in the Second and First Millennia B.C. In the latter periods the new significance was represented by the stylized motifs of the tree. The palmette, which developed in Phoenician art, may be included in this group of artificially represented plants. The original shape of the palmette underwent several changes when Egyptian motifs were included in the composition. (Plate XIV, 1, 2). A more detailed description of the palmette will be given in the following chapter.

¹H. Danthine, Le Palmier-dattier et les arbres sacres dans l'iconographie de l'Asie Occidentale Ancienne, p. 152.

CHAPTER IV

IVORY CARVING DURING THE FIRST MILLENNIUM B.C.

The ivories of the First Millennium B.C. and specially those which were found at Samaria in Palestine, Arslan Tash in North Syria, and Nimrud in Iraq, are closely related in design and technique. They also betray an artistic tradition inherited from the repertoire of the Second Millennium B.C., for the Phoenicians took over where their ancestors the Proto-Phoenician Canaanites left off, notwithstanding the turmoil that plunged Phoenicia and the Levant into a period of unsettlement extending from about 1200 B.C. to 1100 B.C. The similar iconography of the three groups from the above mentioned places, brings them into harmony and agreement with the Second Millennium B.C. ivories and indicates that the craft of ivory carving was not destroyed and relegated to oblivion by the movements of the so-called "Peoples of the Sea".

The mass movements did, however, cause the final collapse of the great empires of the past, and it is due to this fact and to the newly formed Phoenician nation that Phoenicia witnessed her first period of independence and prosperity in the Eleventh Century B.C. which is generally called the "Golden Age of Phoenicia". Moreover at the beginning of the First Millennium B.C. Assyria was not as powerful as she came to be

two hundred years later. All her efforts were concentrated in the suppression of Babylonia, and that is precisely when Phoenicia entered on her Golden Age, and particularly Tyre. It is also during this happy era of Tyre that the United Kingdom of the Israelites witnessed a similar prosperity under Solomon. Amicable as well as trade relations were established between Solomon (960-930 B.C.) and Hiram of Tyre (980-936 B.C.) when the former called for Phoenician help in order to build his temple at Jerusalem. The Phoenicians were actually the only people who were able to provide material, architects and artisans.¹ Crowfoot suggests that an immediate comparison may be drawn between the decorations of the temple of Solomon and the subject and style of the ivories from Samaria. The lions, cherubim, palm trees, nets of checker-works and wreaths of chain works, are all mentioned in connection with Solomon's works.² The technique of covering the cherubims, palm trees, and open flowers with gold foil, which he carved above the doors of the temple³ is found in the treatment of ivory-carvings. That the ivories were of Phoenician workmanship is further confirmed by the fact that the Phoenicians or rather the Proto-Phoenicians had already become noted in this craft in the Second Millennium B.C.; moreover at the time of Ahab, king of Israel who married Jezebel daughter of the king

¹G. Conteneau, La Civilisation Phénicienne, pp. 56-57.

²I. Kings: VII.

³Ibid., VI, 35.

of Tyre, Phoenician influence which was introduced through religion, must have also asserted itself through art at Samaria.

The Phoenician arts and crafts were probably distributed over all the neighbouring countries; this was due either to the settlement of Phoenician communities in cities such as Samaria, Arslan Tash or their establishment in accessible centers from which their works of art were exported to the neighbouring countries and cities.

A. Samaria

The ivories of Samaria,¹ capital of the Israelite kings were discovered in 1932 on the north side of the great court which surrounded the palaces of the Israelite monarchs.² The level in which the ivories were found covered the remains of an Israelite structure which was erroneously taken for a considerable building³ and which turned out to be but a wall parallel to an outer one, the latter being the enclosure wall of the court. The location of the ivories unlike those of Megiddo, could not be identified, due to the fact that they were scattered over a large area with no definite structures around them. Moreover they were embedded in a clayey mass of mud-brick and mixed with remains from later periods. After picking some of the ivories, the earth was removed and a larger collection of ivories was uncovered. Unfortunately these fragments were burnt

¹C. Decamps de Mertzfeld. Ivoires Phéniciens, pp. 62-75.

²Crowfoot, P.E.Q. 1934, "The Ivories from Samaria", p. 6.

³Ibid., p. 7.

by fire and appeared in a fine "ivory black". Charred wood, Israelite pottery, glass and paste insets were in close proximity with them.

The confused state in which the ivories were found suggests that this mass of debris in which the ivories themselves were met as well as the other remains, were removed from elsewhere and thrown on this particular spot, perhaps during the Hellenistic Period.¹

It is very difficult to give a precise date to the ivories due to the fact that they were not found in a well defined structure. However during the excavations which were undertaken by the Harvard University (1908-1910) a fragment of alabaster vase inscribed with the name of Osorkon II (870-847 B.C.) was found with the few ivory pieces which were picked up by the expedition from within the court of the Israelite kings.² The dates of the Egyptian Pharaoh coincide almost with Ahab's dates (869-850 B.C.) It is therefore most likely that the large hoard of ivories which were uncovered by the Crowfoots and found within the enclosure walls belonged to the "ivory house" of Ahab, which was mentioned in the Book of Kings.³ What is meant by ivory house here, is a room or hall, the walls of which were inlaid with ivory panels. At this period or perhaps even earlier, the mud brick walls used to be panelled with cedar

¹Ibid., p. 8.

²Parrot, Samaria, The capital of the Kingdom of Israel, pp. 63-4.

³I Kings, XXII, 39.

wood; it is therefore very likely that ivory plaques were added to decorate the wooden panelling of the walls.¹

The period of the ivories seemed to be a prosperous period, probably that pertaining to Ahab, one of the most powerful kings included in the confederation which was put up against Assyria. Crowfoot gives three objective reasons for placing the Samaria ivories in the first half of the ninth century B.C. First the Biblical tradition that Ahab built an ivory house. Secondly the letters which are inscribed on the backs of some of the ivory fragments are characteristic of the period. Thirdly the date which was proposed by the French Expedition on the evidence of similar letters and marks inscribed on the backs of similar plaques which were found at Arslan Tash in Syria.²

Crowfoot divides the ivories from Samaria into two main groups on the basis of style and techniques.³ The first group is outstanding in its polychromic effect, the simplicity of borders and background, and the extreme depth of relief. In the other group, the colored insets are practically absent from the ivories. The style is not Egyptian although in some cases the subject matter is related to Egypt.

¹Crowfoot, Early Ivories from Samaria, p. 2.

²Tables of these signs are found in Crowfoot, "Early Ivories from Samaria", p. 7, Cf. Thureau-Dangin, Arslan Tash, p. 137.

³Crowfoot, P.E.Q., 1934, "Early Ivories from Samaria", p. 19.

The first group of ivories is especially noted for its Egyptianized character. The details of the themes and motifs such as hair, eyes, profile, lotus flowers are rendered in an Egyptian style. The subject matter includes Egyptian imagery and mythology. The most spectacular pieces of ivory from Samaria are included in this group. They are carved in low relief, and covered with gold foil and polychrome insets. The gold covered the cloisons, while the details which were probably scooped out by means of a scraper, were filled with colored insets.

The figure of Horus was one of the most popular themes borrowed from Egypt. Horus the child, or Harpocrates is seen sitting naked on a lotus flower, representing the morning sun.¹ A very beautiful example on an ivory plaque (Pl. XV: 1) from Samaria bearing his figure is in the shape of a medallion. The child holds a flail in his right hand, while he places the thumb of his left hand in his mouth. He wears an Atef crown on his head while a side lock dangles over one side of his temple. The plaque was covered with gold foil and colored insets except for the borders and the background which were left plain.

Another representation (Pl. XV:2) of Harpocrates found at Samaria is that on which he also appears seated on a lotus flower, holding the flail with his right hand, while his left hand cannot be distinguished because the ivory is broken at

¹Budge, The Mummy, p. 381.

this point. However part of the crown he is wearing looks like a disk. The other part of the scene shows a kneeling figure of the falcon-headed God Ra', wearing a short striped kilt. He raises his right hand in adoration, while with his left hand he lifts the figure of a Maat seated on a neb bowl. He is wearing a solar disk on his head in the manner of Ra'-¹ Horus of the Two Horizons. The Maat in the Egyptian nomenclature is the "daughter of Ra' and mistress of the gods", symbolizing law and order, and is always represented emblematically with the symbol of law in hieroglyphs.²

A similar representation of Horus naked and seated on a lotus flower, also rendered in the same Egyptian style was found at Nimrud,³ and in another style at Arslan Tash (Pl. XXIII; 3). In these two examples Harpocrates is shown between the two goddesses Isis and Nephthys, greeting and hailing his birth. The example from Nimrud is unfortunately badly damaged; however the central figure of Horus can be easily recognized. He is holding the flail in one hand, and places a finger of his other hand in his mouth. On the right side of this central theme, part of a winged goddess appears, probably standing, holding a lotus flower in her left hand. The technique of this plaque, like those from Samaria is rendered in the Egyptian style. The deep grooves which are seen on the flail,

¹ Budge, op.cit., p. 177.

² Ibid., p. 375.

³ Barnett, The Nimrud Ivories, p. 140, Pl. VIII, C51.

lotus flower and wings were probably filled with colored insets, as traces of colored paste still appear in some of the sockets.

The same subject which is found on several plaques from Arslan Tash (Pl. XXIV:2) is rendered in a different style. First of all the technique of carving varies in that the deep grooves are absent here. Gold foil must have covered certain parts of it, such as dress, ornaments, ribbing of wings, necklaces and so on. The theme included a figure of Horus seated on a flowered stem. The child holds the flail in his right hand, while his left hand is placed against his breast. On either side of this central theme, stand two winged figures, wearing the crown of Upper and Lower Egypt. They are dressed in a long coat, with looped fringes, opened at the front thus showing one of the legs. A large Egyptian necklace adorns their neck. Two lilies, one in each hand, replace the lotus flowers; they are held by the goddesses on the Nimrud ivory. The two geniuses here take the place of the two Egyptian goddesses Isis and Nephthys. However they do not keep the attributes of the two goddesses. Thureau-Dangin describing the change says: "Ils (the geniuses), n'ont pas gardé les attributs distinctifs des deux deesses soeurs. Ils ont pris un vêtement masculin et virilisé leur poitrine."¹

Besides this theme, Egyptian details are also found here. The representation of the body facing with head and

¹Thureau-Dangin, Arslan Tash, pp. 95-6.

legs in profile, the slanting eyes, the crisped hair have their counterparts in Egyptian monuments. On the other hand the flat crowns are different from their Egyptian proto-types as the frontal appendage is not found here. The costume of which only the back part is represented is not Egyptian and may be compared with that which appears on the reliefs on the walls of the palace of Assurnasirpal at Nimrud.¹

Another Egyptian motif is illustrated on Plate XVI, 2, where the figure of the God Hah is seen squatting, holding in each hand a palm branch from which dangles the ankh sign, the symbol of life worn in order to prolong life.² The Egyptian God is clad in a short ribbed kilt, a necklace and a cross-belt. He wears a disk on his head, which crosses the frame and comes in between a row of Phoenician palmettes carved on the border of the plaque. Here again the Egyptian theme and style are apparent. The God Hah represented "millions" or infinite time and may be compared to the large ankh amulet, found in the British Museum where the hieroglyphic sign for "one hundred and thousand millions of years" shows the silhouette of a similar squatting figure holding two stems coming out of two frogs.³ Crowfoot draws a comparison with a relief of the Twenty First Dynasty in the temple of Khons at Karnak where the figure appears alone and bearded. The plaque shows two

¹Frankfort, The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient, Pl. 89.

²Budge, The Mummy, p. 315.

³Ibid., p. 315.

and may be more figures of Hah, if we suppose that the plaque was part of a long narrow panelling, while ankh signs are suspended on the uraeus which appears on the crown.¹

The subject of this plaque is not paralleled by any of the Nimrud and Arslan Tash ivories. It is an Egyptian subject rendered in an Egyptian style. The Phoenician workmanship is betrayed by the presence of the Phoenician palmettes on the border of the plaque.

The plaques which bear the figures of Isis and Nephthys may be paralleled by a fragment of ivory from Nimrud which was probably part of a larger composition including two goddesses.² The Samaria example (Plate XVII:1) is almost complete; it shows two squatting figures facing and extending their arms and wings in the usual attitude of the goddesses; they hold a lotus flower in each hand. Their crown consists of a disk placed on their hair which is treated in the Egyptian fashion. The djed sign which is placed in the middle between them identifies these goddesses with Isis and Nephthys; the Book of the Dead associates this sign with the backbone and vertebrae of Osiris and is related to the cult of this god.³ The djed sign on the ivory plaque is set on an inverted lotus flower. This variation of the Egyptian original might allude to one of the different representations of the Phoenician tree, which appears flanked by

¹Crowfoot, The Early Ivories from Samaria, p. 14-5, Fig. 2.

²Barnett, The Nimrud Ivories, Pl. VIII C52b.

³Budge, The Mummy, p. 307.

two figures, the latter representing all sorts of creatures, such as sphinxes, griffins, goddesses, and so on.

Isis and Nephthys are also found on a plaque from Arslan Tash (Plate XXV:2) with their spread wings in their ritualistic attitude. The goddesses here have kept their feminine character unlike those flanking the "child Horus" (see Pl. XXIV:2) which have already been mentioned. The right half of the plaque is illustrated here. The hair of the figure is set in the Egyptian manner, and is surmounted by the Royal Crown from which protrudes an uraeus. The goddess holds a lily in each hand. Her costume is Asiatic consisting of a long tunic decorated with bands and circles at the hem. The part of the dress which covers the chest has been carelessly omitted from the representation.¹ Another non-Egyptian trend is the plant towards which the goddess is turned; it is another stylized variation of the sacred tree. This particular plaque from Arslan Tash is related to the second group of ivories from Samaria although the subject is more or less Egyptian, the style and technique are not.

Osiris was another Egyptian god who was generally liked and honored in Phoenicia. He is also included in the imagery of the Samaria ivories. A fragmentary plaque showing a figure with the head missing is thought to represent Osiris,² (Pl. XVI:1) The figure is wearing a long robe which is more Syrian than

¹Thureau-Dangin, Arslan Tash, pp. 98-9.

²Crowfoot, Early Ivories from Samaria, p. 13.

Egyptian in style. The garment falls in vertical pleats on the left side, and is arranged in horizontal pleats on the right side. This evidently represents a double garment. He wears a pectoral of the Egyptian type which consists of a semi-circular broad breast-plate decorated with vertical lines. In his left hand he holds the flail which he places over his shoulder like the child Horus; his right hand seems to be holding the ankh sign.

Another fragment of ivory of Egyptian subject and style is the long rectangular plaque (pl. XVII:2) which has been designated as the Eyes of Horus by Crowfoot.¹ There is perfect symmetry in this representation. A middle motif consisting of papyrus stems springing out of the Nile waters, is flanked by double representations of the Eyes of Horus. Each Eye rests on an upright uraeus surmounted by a disk; the uraeus seems to be the forepart of a winged body of Mut the Vulture-Goddess.

In connection with these Egyptianized ivory plaques from Samaria, M.A. Moret draws attention to those showing dogmatic motifs, amongst others the daily rebirth of the sun-child Harpocrates, and the annual rebirth of Osiris in the form of a djed tree which signifies the promise for men who practice Maat a rebirth after death similar to that of Ra' and Osiris. The motif consisting of the offering of Maat to a reborn god, attests the union of Maat and Ra' and proclaims that the essential offering to the god is the offering of justice in place of

¹Crowfoot, op.cit., p. 17.

material sacrifices. These doctrines were basic to Egyptian religion and society since the Pyramid Texts that is twenty six centuries before the Christian Era. It is to be noted further that Ahab and Jezebel followed a new Egyptian reconquest of Palestine and Phoenicia. Shishak took Jerusalem in 930 B.C. and re-established Egyptian influence which lasted down to the reign of Osorkon II around 840 B.C. The prophets from Solomon down to Isaih preached a great spiritual and moral reform which preferred the establishment of justice to material sacrifices in connection with the cult of Yahweh. Moret raises a question here: could it not have been to Egyptian wisdom, of which the dogmatic themes are accepted by Ahab and Jezebel to decorate their palace, that this evolution in the prophetic literature of thinking of the Jews is due? This progression could have emanated in Egypt where, since ages, the Truth-Justice was the offering of choice that the god reclaimed from the faithful.¹

Belonging to this same group of ivories which consists of polychrome insets and overlaying of gold foil are some of the decorative designs which occur at Samaria. The patterns included lotus flowers, lilies, buds, and palmettes.² These floral motifs were arranged either in rows or in chains, (Pl. XXII; 2,3), and sometimes they occurred alone. The fragments

¹A Moret, 'Motifs dogmatiques Egyptiens à Samarie, Damas, Pasargade'. Journal Asiatique 1936, pp. 485-7.

²Crowfoot: Early Ivories from Samaria, p. 32, Pl. XV.

of ivories bearing these patterns must have come from long plaques which were used in the decoration of chairs, thrones and beds. Rows and chains of lotus and bud, chains of palmettes, rows of lotuses and lilies appear in a highly conventionalized and stylized form.

In the foregoing paragraphs the subject and style of the first group of ivories from Samaria have been treated and compared with those of Nimrud and Arslan Tash which either have the same subject matter and technique or the same subject but carved in a different style. It is the intention of the present writer to describe the technique of the groups of ivory-carvings discovered in the various parts of the Near East and whenever possible draw a comparison between these ivories stressing differences and similarities in style.

The second group of ivories from Samaria are generally carved in deeper relief, and are rarely inlaid with colored insets. They include subjects which are not directly or closely related to Egyptian mythology and imagery. This style finds parallels at Nimrud and Arslan Tash where sometimes better examples of the same subject with certain differences are found. The most popular themes which come under this group are the "Woman at the Window" the winged sphinx, the cow and her calf, the lion and bull plaques and so on. Sculpture in the round is another technique noted at Samaria, the best example of which is the carving of the two lions (pl. XVIII).

The two beasts which might have decorated the arms of

a seat,¹ are represented in a crouched position with open mouths. The delicately carved shoulders and hindquarters differ from the Assyrian and Hittite musculature of the animals, and are thus closer to the Egyptian parallels. The shaggy hair which usually covers the back and belly of the Assyrian lions² does not appear on the example from Samaria. The lions in the round from Arslan Tash³ and Nimrud (Pl. XXXIII; 2) are on the other hand purely and specifically Assyrian. The three heads of lions from Arslan Tash and the one head from Nimrud which survived have an open menacing mouth, an attitude which is usually found in Assyrian monuments.

The theme of the battling animals or animal combats is a very old theme⁴ which was frequently reproduced on ancient Mesopotamian monuments. The ritualistic significance has already been discussed in Chapter III; it symbolized the struggle between the gods from which resulted the cyclic movement of the seasons. The plaque from Samaria (Pl. XIX:1) is in pierced relief and reminds one of the twisted position of the dog ravaging the ibex on the ivory comb from Megiddo. The plaque which has a frame represents a lion attacking a

¹I Kings X, 19, 20.

²Lloyd, The Art of the Ancient Near East, p. 210, Fig. 168.

³Thureau-Dangin, Arslan Tash, p. 128, Pl. XLII, 89, 90, 91.

⁴G. Conteneau: Manuel d'Archeologie Orientale; Vol. I, p. 381.

bull. The mane, and the smooth belly of the lion are treated in the same way as that of the lions sculptured in the round. The four straps on the main body are paralleled on examples from Egypt.¹ The wild beast is shown in a contorted position. Its fore-quarters are crouched beneath the bull in order to be able to seize the prey by its throat. The suffocating and bleeding bull pants and sticks out its tongue under the strain of the attack. This naturalistic representation in art has been influenced by the Aegeans in the Second Millennium B.C. and this tradition was brought down into the First Millennium B.C. on the Eastern mainland.

The conventionalized floral designs of the inlaid group, are also found in the second group. The chains of buds and lotus flowers (Pl. XIX:2) are derived ultimately from Egypt,² where they were usually painted around the walls of tombs. The Egyptian models of flowers, buds, and grapes were rendered in an inverted manner like the Samaria example,³ where an egg-shaped tongue occurs between the bud and the flower.

The most popular example of floral motif at Samaria seemed to be the palm (Pl. XXII, 1). Several examples of different sizes were found. The palm appears with drooping fronds with the stem and base resembling an inverted cone; the narrow end of the stem forms a chevron from which spring the trisected

¹ Crowfoot, Early Ivories from Samaria, Footnote 4 refers to Mariette: Karnak, Pl. 14.

² Ibid., p. 33.

³ The chain pattern of inverted lotus flowers is also found on the sarcophagus of Ahiaram.

fronds. Highly stylized clusters of dates were sometimes placed on top of the fronds. Two other pairs of fronds spring from a second chevron, but they do not droop and are instead cut at a certain point where the frame is placed. Finally the top of the composition is treated in two different ways; it is either a chevron, or a palmette which usually finishes the palm.

B. Arslan Tash

Arslan Tash is presently a Kurdish Village which lies about 30 kms. from the Euphrates. The site was called Hadatu in ancient times as is attested by Assyrian Inscriptions. Moreover according to the excavators there is no reason to think that this locality had any particular importance before the coming of the Assyrians.¹ However the Assyrian settlement on the site does not seem to have been important before the time of Tiglath Pileser III (745-727 B.C.). One of the first steps which was taken by this king when he ascended the throne was to restore royal authority which his predecessors down to Shalmaneser IV had lost. It is during the reign of these kings that the governors of the provinces became independent. Among the measures taken by Tiglath Pileser III to stop the encroachment on the royal power was to create royal residences in diverse places of the empire whence he would be able to supervise the administration and which at the same time would be considered a symbol of the central power.²

¹Thureau-Dangin: Arslan Tash, p. 7.

²Ibid., pp. 7-8.

The excavations which were undertaken at Arslan Tash uncovered a palace which was attributed to Tiglath Pileser III, probably that built as a residence in order to curb the power of the province that included Hadatu. The discovery of the structure in which the ivories were found came as a stroke of luck. The difficulty with which the excavators were faced to locate the oriental wing of the palace, made them cut a deep trench progressing from east to west. When the complete structure was distangled, it was found to be independent of the palace, and also built on a lower level. Although the plans of both the palace and the "Batiments aux Ivoires" are closely related, the latter is of an earlier date. In the ninth century B.C. an Aramaean state spread over both sides of the Euphrates, while its central power was established at Til Barsip (modern Tell Ahmar). Assurnasirpal II imposed tribute on it, but it is only under his successor Shalmaneser III that Til Barsip was actually captured in 856 B.C. The "Bâtiment aux Ivoires" does not seem to be much earlier than this date.¹

The ivories which were discovered in 1928, were mostly found on the north side of Room 14.² Fragments of thin polished ivory plaques were set in a peculiar arrangement, they actually formed one small side and two long sides of a rectangle measuring 1.95 meters in length and 0.96 meters in width.

¹Ibid., p. 54.

²Ibid., See fig. 31 and plan of the Palace and the Bâtiment aux Ivoires.

Furthermore they probably formed the framework of a wooden bed. Another such arrangement lay at a distance of 39 cms. from the first bed, and undoubtedly represented a second bed. These plaques must have fallen down when the wooden part of the beds rotted away.

The inscription which was found on three fragments of a thin ivory plaque included the name of a certain Hazael. The inscription in question was a dedication given by an unknown person to "our lord Hazael, in the year...". A written historical fact identifies this Hazael with the Aramaean Hazael of Damascus who was contemporary with Shalmaneser III (859-823 B.C.) and against whom he fought a battle in 841 B.C. Hazael was defeated but Damascus was not captured by the Assyrian king. Two or three decades later, Adad-Nirari III (809-782 B.C.), the grand son of Shalmaneser III, advanced against the Aramaean city and its Aramean king Ben-Hadad III and collected from him a rich tribute which included "... 3000 talents of copper, 5000 talents of silver, colored woollen and linen garments, an ivory bed an ivory couch, inlaid and bejeweled."¹

The ivories from Arslan Tash have probably come from what was left of the tribute received by Adad-Nirari. They must have definitely belonged to Hazael king of Damascus whose reign falls in the second half of the ninth century B.C. Moreover the ivories might have been carved at Damascus or they might have been imported from centers where ivory-carving was

¹Luckenbill, Ancient Records of Assyria I, 740.

practiced. In either case the collection is noted by its relation to the composite art of the Phoenicians.

The technique of incrustation found at Samaria and Nimrud is absent from the collection of Arslan Tash. However the technique of overlaying the ivory with gold foil which was familiar on the two other sites is also found at Arslan Tash, as traces of gold were actually picked up on certain pieces of ivory carved in low relief. Sculpture in the round was also practiced on some pieces of ivory such as the lion's heads, and the figures shown facing and in profile.

Three main trends are felt in the composition of the ivories. The Egyptian influence is actually the strongest, followed by the Aegean and the local. Plaques that betray Egyptian influence were already discussed above. Although these ivory-carvings were not rendered in the traditional Egyptian technique of cloisonné work, they presented Egyptian subjects and themes with some modifications in details, such as stature and costumes, which were of purely Asiatic origin.

Among the carved ivory plaques of non-Egyptian style which bear an Egyptian theme is the one representing two figures binding a tree (Plate XXIV:2). They are seen in profile wearing the double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt and dressed in a long tunic with looped edges under which appears a similarly trimmed short kilt¹. The figures are in the act of binding a bundle of papyrus stems on which a small figure is seated holding a sceptre

¹

A garment which was also found on the ivories of the Second Millennium B.C.

ine one hand, and wearing a solar disk on his head. The upper part of the bundle is fastened with a knot, while from the lower part two short stems terminate in a papyrus flower on each side of the bundle, and on which the figures place one of their feet.

A similar representation, but with several modifications was found at Nimrud (Pl. XXIX: 2). The figures wear an Egyptian wig and short kilts, and place one of their feet on a papyrus flower in the manner of the above mentioned figures on the ivory plaque from Arslan Tash. In the middle there is a large papyrus trunk in bloom. Two stems rising from the base of the trunk form two loops on each side of it. The same stems which are held by the figures form two other loops over their shoulders, before terminating in a papyrus flower. Another such theme is found also at Nimrud, but with a change in costume (Pl. XXX, 2). A long tunic trimmed at the hem is doubled on one side by a pleated piece of cloth.

The subject of the two examples from Nimrud and Arslan Tash is adapted from a well known Egyptian theme where the Two Nile Gods of Upper and Lower Egypt bind the lily and the papyrus around the hieroglyphic sign "sma" which means unity. The scene symbolized the union of Upper and Lower Egypt. Thureau-Dangin mentions for a comparison, the throne of one of the colossi of Memnon, where the South Nile wearing the lily faces the North Nile who wears the papyrus, and both flank a central motif which consists of the two plants, on which the two figures draw in

order to bind them into the symbol of unity.¹ A scene as such which is symbolical of a historical fact appealed to every individual in Egypt. The Asiatic examples reproduce variants of the theme which however could not be of any use to the Egyptians. The classical attitude is there, but the figures are not well defined like the Egyptian deities who either represented some known gods or definite nomes; moreover there is only one kind of plant on the ivory, while the Egyptian original in order to have its effect had to have two sorts of plants, the lily and the papyrus. The two figures on the ivory cannot be identified, unless those wearing royal crowns from Arslan Tash represent princes or kings, but here again it is an abstract identification not a definite individuality of a known person.² The two plants were fused into one, proceeding from a papyrus. Moreover the small figure sitting on the plant, occurring on the Arslan Tash example, is not found in the Egyptian original, but seems to have derived from a scene where the king wearing the solar disk is shown sitting on a bundle of stems that are being bound by Horus and Seth.³

The original model suffered radical changes at the hands of the Phoenician artisan, for the two figures far from being Egyptian in dress and appearance, flank a variant of the usual central motif. A question is raised here. Did the

¹Thureau-Dangin: Arslan Tash, p. 100, Fig. 36.

²Barnett: The Nimrud Ivories, p. 139.

³Thureau-Dangin: Arslan Tash, pp. 101-2.

decorative value of the Egyptian model inspire the ivory-carver who in turn rendered it in his own style, without understanding its meaning, or did the variant have an interpretation of its own? A suggestion concerning the mythological significance of this representation was put forward by R.D. Barnett. He thinks that although "it is rash to suggest that the binding of the plant really symbolizes the binding of Tammuz", the relation of the latter god with the binding is based on evidence drawn from a late Babylonian Calendar which mentions the month Tammuz during which the god bearing this name is "bound and died". The cult of Tammuz was possibly observed in the west, as an allusion to the "Women weeping for Tammuz" is made by Ezekiel (8, 14). The bound tree, on the other hand, could refer to the Phoenician asherah or cult-post which has not yet been identified with any of the Phoenician gods. However Plutarch mentions that during his time the god Eshmun-Adonis was worshipped by the Phoenicians at Byblos in the form of a post or asherah.¹

Barnett gave this only as a suggestion, and it is as yet very difficult to give a definite interpretation about any representation of this kind due to the fact that the theme was originally Egyptian and might have been only copied for decorative purposes by the Phoenician ivory-carver.

The grazing deer is among the animals represented on the ivories from Arslan Tash. A rectangular plaque (Pl. XXV:3)

¹Barnett: The Nimrud Ivories, pp. 139-140.

shows a passing stag or deer, in the attitude of grazing or drinking water. Two branches terminating in a lanceolate leaf is seen between its legs. In front of the animal stands a tree of which only the upper part has survived. Incomplete examples were found at Nimrud¹ and Samaria.² According to Thureau-Dangin these plaques are real masterpieces in that they represent harmony in outline and beauty in movement.³ The stag is not found in the Egyptian classical art, but on the other hand it occurs frequently in oriental art. The stag on the ivory is represented in the naturalistic attitude which was inherited from the Aegean world. Unlike the Assyrian example where the convention for a walking quadruped was to show the simultaneous progression of the forelegs and hindlegs, the Arslan Tash ivory renders the real and exact attitude of the specie.⁴

Other quadrupeds found in the Arslan Tash collection and paralleled by incomplete examples from Nimrud,⁵ are the cow and her calf. The cow is almost always represented in the same attitude. It is seen in profile suckling its calf, and turning her head sideways in order to lick its rump (Pl. XXIV: 3). On either side of this central theme which has been illustrated, there are two thickets. The subject is rendered in full and pierced plaques.

¹Ibid., Pl. II, C35.

²Crowfoot: Early Ivories from Samaria, Pl. X, 8, 8a.

³Thureau-Dangin, Arslan Tash, p. 119.

⁴Ibid., p. 119.

⁵Barnett, op.cit., Pl. V, C22, 32; C23, 34; C29.

⁶Thureau-Dangin, op.cit., p. 124, Figs. 43, 44.

Similar representations occurred in Egypt during the Old Kingdom, the Middle Kingdom and the New Kingdom.¹ The scene must have been very popular in the New Kingdom, for it became part of the hieroglyphic inscriptions, in which it expressed the idea of joy.² In the Aegean the earliest example appears on a faience which was found in a temple deposit at Knossos.³ Thureau-Dangin thinks that the two traditions, the Egyptian and the Aegean were fused and confounded and this fusion spread on to the ivories. He further points out that the plaques are related to certain examples of the same motif, which are called the Cypro-Phoenician group. In the same group he includes the bowl and several scarabs, one of which bears a Cypriote inscription from Curium, a scarab from Arwad, and a fourth scarab with a Phoenician inscription from an unknown locality.⁴ It should be noted that in all the above mentioned examples, there appears the ribbing on the neck of the cow, which is sometimes placed on the wrong side of the neck like the models from Arslan Tash and Nimrud. The free movement and vivid attitude which are found on the ivory from Arslan Tash, are nearer to the Aegean proto-types than to the stiff conventionalized Egyptian examples. The ribbings which are not found in Egypt are of Aegean origin. Earlier examples in the west reproduce bulls wearing long hair on their neck and back.

¹Thureau-Dangin, op.cit., p. 124, Figs. 43, 44.

²Ibid., p. 124, Footnote 8, refers to Gardiner, Egyptian Grammar, p. 450, No. 5.

³Ibid.: p. 124, Footnote 2, refers to Evans, The Palace of Minos I, Fig. 367.

⁴Thureau-Dangin, op.cit., pp. 124-5.

Gradually therefore, the ribbing might have been intended to reproduce the mane of the bull, a practice which was probably extended on the drawing of the cow.

Thureau-Dangin does not give an explanation of the theme. However an attempt at explaining it is made by R.D. Barnett in a more recent publication. The subject of the cow may be traced back to Sumerian times when the animal constituted the most popular attribute of the goddess Ninhursag the "Queen of the Mountains". Later on, the Babylonian nude goddess, probably Ishtar, is represented on a cylinder seal, holding her breasts and standing beneath a cow and a calf.¹ One of Ishtar's epithets is that she is "a benevolent cow who suckles princes". On this account Barnett identifies the goddess who suckles the two youths from Ras Shamra with Ishtar. The representation of the suckling cow which symbolizes the role of the goddess, was however introduced into Phoenicia at the beginning of the Second Millennium B.C. as is attested by the gold pectoral bearing the cartouche of Amenemhat III of the Twelfth Dynasty which was found at Byblos.² In Egypt the representation of a figure sucking a cow's udder became popular in the New Kingdom, where Hathor as a cow wearing the horned sun-disk is seen suckling Queen Hatshepsut on a relief from Deir el-Bahri.³ The conception of the goddess suckling

¹R.D. Barnett, The Nimrud Ivories, p. 143, footnote 4 refers to Scheil, Recueil de Travaux XX, p. 62.

²Baramki: Phoenicia and the Phoenicians, Pl. I.

³Barnett: The Nimrud Ivories, p. 143, Fig. 51.

and nursing kings is also found late in Seventh Century Assyria, when Assurbaniral was told by Nabu the messenger of the gods that he was still young when he sat "on the lap of the Queen of Nineveh" and that he placed four nipples in his mouth".¹ The Phoenicians must have interpreted the subject in the same way as the Babylonians. The cow suckling its calf was a "mystery of birth of one of their deities".² Besides the symbolical significance of the theme Barnett points out the "emotional charm", and "aesthetic compactness"³ in which the subject is rendered, the best example of which is found on the Arslan Tash plaques.

The Arslan Tash collection of ivories produces the finest examples of the "Woman at the Window" theme. The same subject was also found at Nimrud (Pl. XXXIII:1) and Samaria (Pl. XIX:3); in Samaria however only one almost complete ivory plaque carved in the same manner, was found. The subject depicts the head of a woman, wearing an Egyptian wig and appearing over a balustrade (Pl. XXIV:1). Four and sometimes three columns with capitals made up of two volutes over a rosette hold up the lintel. The whole motif is placed in a three recessed frame. The theme of the plaque was rarely found in earlier examples. "The whole motif" says Barnett "though first met in a bronze rectangular stand from Enkomi of the Thirteenth

¹Luckenbill: Ancient Assyrian Records II, 1129.

²Barnett: op.cit., pp. 144-5.

³Ibid: p. 143.

Century B.C. is mainly confirmed thereafter to Phoenician ivories".¹

The theme of the "Woman at the Window" must have had a significance. G. Conteneau thinks that it originated in Egypt where it represented the dead soul who looks out of the small window placed over the closed door of his tomb, to get in contact with the visitors who come to see him.² According to him, this theme had lost its significance at a very early date and had become a mere decorative motif. The Enkomi example on the bronze stand is only another imitation of the theme rendered in a different technique.³ Thureau-Dangin and Barnett on the other hand, discuss at length the significance of the representation and the identity of the woman herself.

The opening in which the face of the woman appears has originated in Phoenicia. It is a typically Tyrian window which, according to the Talmud, is different from the Egyptian variety in that the latter was grilled. Furthermore this window with the balustrade points to an upper story of a house. The upper stories with windows were in fact characteristics of Phoenician and Syrian architecture.⁴ These higher quarters were probably

¹Barnett: The Nimrud Ivories, p. 145.

²Conteneau: Manuel d'Archeologie Orientale, Vol. III, pp. 1334-5.

³Ibid: p. 1335.

⁴Barnett: op.cit., p. 145. There is a list of actual examples which point to the existence of upper floors and windows in Syrian and Phoenician architecture. Fig. 53, is an illustration of a part of a relief from Sennecharib's palace at Kuyunjik. The buildings which are represented here have upper windows with balustrades supported by miniature columns like the examples on the ivories. The whole scene on the walls of the palace probably depicts the third campaign of Sennecharib against Sidon.

the quarters of women, where they could lean out of the window and observe the movements of passers-by. A question may be raised here, namely were the examples on the ivories just a reproduction of a fact of every-day life, or did these representations use familiar architectural patterns to express a cultic significance? Thureau-Dangin and Barnett in discussing at length the significance of the representation and the identity of the woman herself agree that the lady is a type of Ashtarte whom the Greeks knew as Aphrodite Parakypousas. The theme itself is comparable to the cult of Aphrodite found in the classical Greek Texts. The cult in which the goddess bends forward from a window existed at Cyprus and Salamis and is similar to the cult of the "goddess at the Window" which originated in Babylonia. Barnett makes an identification of the face on the ivories on the evidence of symbolical ornaments such as necklaces, earrings and bracelets worn by the female goddesses. On one of the examples from Arslan Tash, the woman wears a frontlet on her forehead which is undoubtedly another religious ornament as attested by a similar thing formed on the forehead of a naked goddess drawn on the nose-piece of a horse. The ornament itself consists of a metallic rectangular plate, crossed on its length by cords from which dangles a row of pomegranates or tassels. The whole was tied at the back of the head by means of a cord. This ornament is a symbol of the Goddess Ashtarte,¹ and on this

¹Barnett: "The Nimrud Ivories and the Art of the Phoenicians", Iraq II, 1935, p. 203, Fig. 7.

account the naked goddess and the woman at the window are related.

The legend which was known in Cyprus and Salamis relates the story of a maiden whose lover died at her doorstep. During his funeral, the lady looking out of the window just when the procession happened to pass near her house, looked at the dead body and smiled scornfully. Aphrodite saw the pitiless expression on her face and so decided to turn the woman into a stone statue, because she resented this refusal on the part of the maiden to "grant the fruits of love." It is also mentioned in the legend that the stone statue was taken to Salamis where it was placed in a temple, the temple of Aphrodite Parakypousas.

From this legend it is gathered that the woman at the window was a form of Aphrodite, while the legend itself may be compared to the Ashtarte-Adonis myth. Furthermore the legend was taken as a cause assigned to the explanation of the stone statue which depicted the motif. Moreover the explanation was based on the fact that the persons who were vowed to this cult, or the votaresses were mortal human beings "whose duty was to grant the fruits of their love."¹

The cult of Aphrodite Parakypousas is similar to the cult of the Babylonian goddess Kilili whose name is derived from Kililu or Kelil in Hebrew meaning "crown" and is connected

¹Barnett: The Nimrud Ivories, p. 149.

with the "crown consisting of a cord" which the Babylonian virgins placed on their head before their marriage to offer themselves to strangers in the shrine of Mylitta in Babylon. The religious sacrifice of virginity was actually practiced on Phoenicia and Cyprus in later times.¹ One of the epithets of Kilili was "she who bends out of the window",² and thus the Babylonian goddess is identified with Aphrodite, while the latter is also connected with Ashtarte as has been shown above. The theme of the woman at the window "alludes to a special aspect of the worship of Ashtarte in which the goddess or her votaress was thought to gaze unveiled from her chamber in the role of a sacred prostitute".³

Another example of the non-Egyptian themes on ivories found at Arslan Tash is the pierced plaque bearing the figure of a bearded man who stands facing, with his arms crossed against his chest. (Pl. XXV:1). The long fringed tunic he wears is partly covered by an overcoat. His feet which are seen in profile are shod in sandals with heels. A middle parting divides his slightly undulating hair which is of average length. A thin plate placed on his forehead keeps his hair in place. His beard is curly and it tapers slowly until it terminates in a pointed tress. Thureau-Dangin compares this purely oriental figure to the king of Sidon on the stele

¹Ibid.,

²Ibid., pp. 150-151.

³Ibid., p. 172.

of Essarhaddon which was discovered at Zinjirli.¹ The king has a pointed beard, average hair and wears a long tunic. The overcoat placed on the left shoulder is a garment generally found in the Ancient Orient. However the fringes of the tunic and the coat, as well as the heeled sandals, seem to reflect a fashion of Assyrian origin. The crossed arms over the chest is an attitude which is also frequently found in Assyrian and Babylonian monuments.² This figure probably represents a Syrian prince, as attested by the strong nose, the large nostrils and the fleshy lips.

This portrait of an oriental person may be contrasted to the figure represented on a long rectangular plaque of ivory also found in the same collection from Arslan Tash.³ The figure is rendered in the Egyptian convention namely a body facing, with head and legs in profile. The person represented wears an Assyrian long fringed coat which covers part of one leg. He wears a large Egyptian necklace, and holds his hair in a plate decorated with a geometrical design. He has slanting eyes, but unfortunately nothing can be seen of his nose or mouth. This figure, unlike the above mentioned Syrian figure which is realistic in character, is a work of pure convention almost completely modelled on Egyptian prototypes.

The love of the ancient folk for fantastic creatures

¹Syria X, 1929, Thureau-Dangin, "Tell Ahmar", p. 192.

²Thureau-Dangin: Arslan Tash, p. 111.

³Ibid., p. 112, Pl. XXX, 44.

which was met during the Second Millennium B.C. continued into the First Millennium B.C. The Asiatic sphinx was, amongst others, one of the mythical creatures which were greatly favoured during this Millennium. It appeared in several shapes and forms at the three sites of Samaria, Arslan Tash and Nimrud. Small changes and modification in the details however, occurred on the examples from the three different places.

Among the types of sphinxes which were found at Arslan Tash is the ram headed sphinx. It occurs on a pierced plaque (Pl. XXVI), bearing a central motif which consists of the superposition of Phoenician or Cypro-Phoenician palmettes. Two sphinxes actually flank the Sacred Tree; they wear a long Egyptian wig and the Double Crown of Upper and Lower Egypt; their thin bodies make them look like dogs while their tails curl up into a spiral; their partly open wings start under the abdomen. Between their fore-legs dangles a pleated piece of cloth, decorated with chevron patterns. Their eyes are incrustated with white material which was inserted into the ivory. Certain details such as horns, nervures of wings, ornaments of the breast-piece were overlaid with gold foil as attested by the yellow traces which still show on these particular details. The absence of borders on the small sides of the plaque and the partly preserved sacred trees on these small sides, suggest the idea that this plaque was part of a long rectangular band made up of several such similar plaques, arranged consecutively on a horizontal plane.

This particular panel from Arslan Tash served as a model for a similar plaque from Samaria of which only thirteen small

pieces were found (Pl. XX:2). The reconstructed piece from Samaria shows the same thin bodies of the sphinxes, the same ribbed wings and the same heads with the Egyptian Double Crown. This Phoenician piece of art may be compared to, and contrasted with a similar representation of two human-headed sphinxes which were discovered at Nimrud belonging to the Syrian group of ivory-carving.¹ The harmonious and lenient Phoenician style found on this plaque is even more emphasized when compared with the bulky, inartistic shapes and forms which are reproduced on the Syrian example.

The group of the two ram-headed sphinxes flanking a Sacred Tree is also similar to the representation of the two human-headed sphinxes on a cup from Fayum.² The Asiatic example has the head of the ram-headed god Ammon. This idea of associating the body of a lion with a ram's head was borrowed from Egypt, where as an example, it is enough to mention the famous avenue of sphinxes with ram's heads, of the great temple of Ammon at Thebes. However the composition itself is Asiatic in origin,³ in that the idea of grouping figures around a central motif has originated in the Ancient Orient and most probably has been initiated by the Phoenicians.

Another type of representation is the winged male sphinx with a human head, wearing the long Egyptian wig and the Double

¹Barnett: The Nimrud Ivories, Pl. XXI, S6.

²Hassan: Le Sphinx, Fig. 21.

³Thureau-Dangin: Arslan Tash, p. 104.

Crown of Upper and Lower Egypt. The three examples from Arslan Tash (Pl. XXIII, 1), Nimrud (Pl. XXVIII, 2) and Samaria (Pl. XX, 1) are very similar in outline and general execution and seem to have come out of the same workshop. There are however small differences in the details between the Nimrud Ivories and the other two examples, such as the decoration on the breast-piece, and the facial features. The sphinx from Samaria differs from the other two in that it wears an Egyptian beard and is represented between stylized sacred trees made up of Phoenician palmettes.

This winged male sphinx generally appears wearing an Egyptian Double Crown, a kilt and a necklace. The sphinx which originally represented the power and might of the Pharaoh in Egypt, was differently interpreted in Phoenicia, Syria and Palestine. He is the cherub which was depicted in the Holy of Holies of the Temple of Solomon where he appears with extended wings, to protect the most sacred part of the building. The description in the Bible presents them with open wings "and the wings of the cherubim were stretched forth so that the wing of the one touched the one wall, and the wing of the other cherub touched the other wall, and their wings touched one another in the midst of the house."¹ They were probably represented, passant, looking towards each other, with their heads facing.

The word cherub is derived from charabu which means to

¹I Kings VII, 26, 27.

"intercede".¹ Moreover the description of the cherubs in Biblical accounts makes us presume that the sphinx was thought to be an interceding angel, supporting the throne of Yahweh. Just as he is conceived to be in the pagan Phoenician religion. This type of human headed sphinx resembles the sphinx forming the arm of the throne on the Megiddo ivory panel (Pl. XII) and the throne on the sarcophagus of Ahiram. They differ however in sex and meaning. The female sphinx of the Second Millennium B.C. represented a goddess, the goddess Ashtarte, while the male sphinx of the First Millennium B.C. is a cherub, and no longer an attribute of the god, but has a function of its own.

The female sphinx is nevertheless found on the ivories of the First Millennium B.C. A pierced plaque from Arslan Tash (Pl. XXIII, 2) bears the figure of a winged sphinx, squatting, with the body shown in profile and head facing. The hair is crisped in the Egyptian style, and falls in thick plaits over the shoulders; the face of the sphinx has a feminine appearance. A large Egyptian necklace adorns its neck. A kilt decorated with chevron patterns falls between the forelegs in the manner of the above mentioned sphinx. The tail curls up in the form of a question mark.

This representation is paralleled by an example from Nimrud (Pl. XXXI: 1), which was probably wrought in the Egyptian cloisonné work. The female sphinx is represented facing, with

¹Mélanges de l'Université Saint Joseph, Vol. XXXVII, 1960-61. P. de Vaux, "Les Cherubins et l'Arche d'Alliance, Les Sphinx Gardiens et les Trones Divins dans l'Ancient Testament", pp. 93-124.

body in profile. A piece of cloth falls between the forelegs, but the headdress of this female sphinx differs from that of Arslan Tash in that it is the well known Hathoric headdress.

The female sphinx usually forms a unit in a pair of female sphinxes flanking a Sacred Tree to guard it. The Sacred Tree is generally associated with goats, a theme related with fertility cults from a very early period. There is an example in the Layard collection from Nimrud where a djed tree, a symbol of Osiris is represented with the female sphinx.¹ In the legend of Isis and Osiris at Byblos the coffin in which the body of the dead god Osiris was found, floated to Byblos, and was enveloped in a thorn tree. The association of the sphinx with the djed tree might be an expression of the locally interpreted legend in terms of Ashtarte (Ishtar) and Adonis - Eshmun.²

Another example from Nimrud bearing the figures of sphinxes is the one where two male sphinxes are shown back to back with displayed wings (Pl. XXXI, 3). One of them advances towards a Sacred Tree. The other is fragmentary, but must have also been advancing towards another Sacred Tree to the left. The wig of the complete sphinx, is patterned with zig-zag lines. The kilt is decorated with dotted lines. The conventionalized incised lines bring out the musculature of the animals. The facial features are more akin to Syrian rather than to Phoenician or Egyptian characteristics and thus bring this example close to the Syrian style of ivory-carving.

¹Barnett: The Nimrud Ivories, Pl. VIII, C52, C54.

²Ibid: p. 87.

At Arslan Tash as elsewhere, the decorative motifs (Pl. XXVII) include the lotus flower, (6) the lily (2) the papyrus (4) and the Phoenician palmette (1). A very interesting motif however found at this site is the vegetal decoration consisting of bushes with lanceolate leaves, the branches of which interlace and intertwine to form a beautiful harmonious whole (3).

C. Nimrud

The ivories which were discovered at Nimrud were found in two places some distance apart. One lot was found by A.H. Layard in 1847 in the north west palace, where he found sixty three pieces of ivories in Rooms V and W. Later in 1854, W.K. Loftus found the other group in the south east palace. The ivories are not a homogeneous collection as they were not worked in the same style.

In 1847, a group of palaces belonging to the Assyrian kings from Assurnasirpal (883-859 B.C.) to Essarhaddon (680-669 B.C.), were discovered by Layard at Nimrud, which lies at about nineteen miles south of Mosul. The site was given its name by Hebrew tradition (Genesis X, 9-12) which assigned the foundation of the "great city" Calah or Kalhu to Nimrud "The Mighty Hunter", one of the grand sons of Noah. Cuneiform Texts on the other hand, do not mention anything about this early foundation of the city. Moreover archaeological evidence does not

¹

Barnett: op.cit., See Plan of Nimrud and its palaces.

in any way support the Biblical account which gives a very ancient date to the site. What was actually found in the earliest level at twenty feet below the surface goes back to the beginning of the Second Millennium B.C.¹

The first tangible account in the Assyrian Texts, complemented by actual facts is that of Assurnasirpal who claims to have washed out the remains of the ancient mound to build his royal capital.² The first real settlement goes back to Shalmaneser I (1272-1243 B.C.) who built his royal capital there as attested by an inscription left by Assurnasirpal who does not however give definite precision as to whether it was Shalmaneser I or II who actually founded it.³ But when the problem is thought about logically, the foundation of the capital must be attributed to Shalmaneser I under whom Assyria enjoyed a period of prosperity, while under Shalmaneser II, the Empire was already on the wane.

Assurnasirpal (883-859 B.C.) built his palace in the north west corner of the mound. Sometime after his death, the royal residence lapsed into ruins during the eighth century B.C. due to civil disturbances and the predilection for other sites by his new successors. Later however, at the close of the eighth century Sargon II (722-704 B.C.) returned to the North West Palace, restored it and redecorated it with the booty he

¹Barnett: The Nimrud Ivories, p. 2.

²Lukenbill, Ancient Records of Assyria I, 489.

³Ibid: 489.

acquired from the cities he vanquished during his numerous campaigns. Apart from sculpture all the small objects, which were found in the palace do not in any way belong to a period earlier than that of Sargon, except for the sixteen lion weights of which nine are inscribed with the name of Shalmaneser V (726-722 B.C.).

The Layard Collection consisted primarily of the sixty three pieces which were found in the doorway between Rooms V and W in the North West Palace. To this series were later added the thirty fragments that were discovered by Mallowan in 1949¹ and the further nine pieces which were discovered in Room X.² It is with this special collection that the present writer is mainly concerned. The importance of this group lies in its Phoenician characteristics, and its relation to the other collections of ivories from Samaria, Arslan Tash and elsewhere which present the same subjects and styles in the craft of ivory-carving. The Loftus group on the other hand will not be included in this discussion because it is not produced by the same school of ivory-carving. The group itself consists of pieces of Syrian manufacture with no Egyptian features, and also of a few pieces betraying Egyptian features but which may be considered as imitations of Phoenician originals by the Syrian artisans rather than direct Egyptian influence.³

¹Mallowan: "Excavations at Nimrud (Kalhu) (1949-50)" in Iraq XIV, pp. 43-54.

²Barnett: The Nimrud Ivories, p. 111.

³Ibid: p. 63.

The Layard collection is difficult to date because it was found in a palace which was built by two different kings in two stages separated from each other by a period of 137 years. As the palace lay derelict for over a century and a quarter, it is unlikely that any of the furniture of the earlier period would be used by the later king Sargon II, and it would not be too bold to assert that no objects or furniture belonging to Assurnasirpal were re-used by Sargon II. As it is also probable that little was added to the palace after Sargon who still continued to use it, possibly as a store-house, after transferring his capital to Dur-Sharrukin, (modern Khorsabad), it is most likely that the ivories belong to Sargon's reign. This circumstantial evidence, as Barnett chooses to call it, is further supported by internal evidence provided by the Phoenician letters which were found on a number of pieces. These letters correspond with a date either in the late ninth century or early in the eighth century. Their evidence is therefore not very definite, and is rather misleading. The Phoenician letters however confirm the suggestion provided by the religious scenes, which attribute the ivories to the Phoenician workmanship.

The original purpose of the collection is generally assumed to have been parts of a rest-bed or couch like that discovered at Arslan Tash on which lay the Assyrian kings banqueting in the presence of their courtisans. This suggestion may be supported by a relief from Kuyunjik where the

representation of the sumptuous couch on which Assurnasirpal is seen seated, is decorated on two legs by plaques bearing the theme of the Woman at the Window.¹ The Layard collection did include, as has already been mentioned, motifs of the Woman at the Window, which are more finely carved and modelled than the similar examples from Samaria and Arslan Tash. This advance in the perfection of the same motif may have been possibly due, to the fact that the Arslan Tash and Samaria ivories were earlier in execution.²

The date of the ivories which is tentatively assigned to Sargon II may be given finality when the cartouche, which is carved on the long rectangular plaque between the two seated figures (Pl. XXVIII, 3), is identified with a definite person. The cartouche seems to bear the name of the person to whom the couch belonged. Barnett puts forward, with strict reserve, the suggestion that the hieroglyphs "represent, however imperfectly, the name of the usurper of Hamath, whom Sargon defeated in the battle of Qarqar (Karkar)".³ If this piece of ivory really belonged to this man, the ritual bed of which it was part, must have been executed by Phoenician artisans in the last quarter of the eighth century B.C. in other words to the period of Sargon II. From the scenes carved on the panels which fell from the original piece of furniture, it is gathered that the

¹H. Frankfort: The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient, Pl. 114.

²Barnett: The Nimrud Ivories, pp. 134-5.

³Ibid: p. 135.

ivory-carvings were part of a ritual bed associated with the goddess Ashtarte (Ishtar).¹

The ivories in the Layard series are carved in several techniques. There are plaques carved in high relief, others carved in shallow relief and inlaid with colored insets related to the special Egyptianized group of ivories from Samaria. Sculpture in the round occurs also in this collection as attested by the lion's head (Pl. XXXIII, 2) which is shown roaring with an opened muzzle in the Assyrian style.

The rectangular panel bearing the two seated figures around a middle motif remind one of the Egyptianized group of ivories from Samaria. The two figures, probably divine persons, are seated facing each other on either side of a cartouche which they salute with one hand and with the other they hold a was sceptre. They are Egyptian in appearance, they have slanting eyes, wear Egyptian wigs, and long folded dresses; they sit on box thrones decorated with a scale pattern which was originally filled with blue insets. The throne is decorated with a panel bearing the ankh sign at one side of it. The cartouche is surmounted by two Maat feathers.

Among the best preserved panels which were found at Nimrud were those carved with the figure of a beardless youth who stands facing a floral motif which consists of a tree formed by a great lotus flower rising from a base made up of two

¹Barnett: "The Nimrud Ivories and the Art of the Phoenicians" Iraq II, 1939, p. 184.

volutés curling on either side of a middle chevron pattern. The youth is bare footed, but wears a quasi-Egyptian dress consisting of a short kilt and a garment which trails over the back leg. This type of dress occurs on the stele of Amrit on which appears Baal wearing the same type of garment.¹ The headdress with the projecting uraeus in front is a free rendering of the Egyptian royal helmet, and is also similar in shape with the protruding uraeus of the headdress of Baal on the same stele. The youth who stands with his right foot extended forward, grasps the stem of the tree with his left hand and raises his other hand in salutation. This attitude might have meant prayer, blessing, oath or greeting to the Sacred Tree.

It is not certain whether the person is of divine or human origin. Although his dress is related to that of the god Baal on the stele of Amrit, yet it is also similar to the Egyptian garment of kings and princes. Though his headdress is almost identical with that of the same god, it is also close in appearance to the Egyptian royal helmet. There is nothing to indicate the exact nature of the figure on this ivory panel; the figure does not stand on a lion, or hold a thunderbolt nor does he possess other attributes of the Phoenician god. The difficulty of identifying the youth is further extended to the explanation of the theme itself; however Barnett

¹Conteneau: La Civilisation Phénicienne, Pl. VI.

relates it with the theme of the two youths binding a Sacred Tree.¹

The ivory panel which was perhaps part of the arm of a throne is among the most beautiful pieces of Phoenician ivories that have come down to us. The ivory which is fairly well preserved is carved with a scene of a lioness ravaging a negro boy in a papyrus and lotus thicket. (Plate XXXII). The circular design inlaid with lapis lazuli on the forehead of the animal relates it to Egyptian representations. Moreover the beast does not show any traces of hair either on the belly or on the mane, and is thus completely dissimilar from Assyrian examples. The Negro wears a short Egyptian kilt of a crinkly texture. The kilt, the head of the youth, and the outlines and stems of the flowers seem to have been lavishly overlaid with gold leaf. Lapis lazuli was inserted in the lotus flowers where they were kept in place in a paste of calcium carbonate and blue powdered frit.² The papyrus flowers on the other hand were inlaid with carnelian. The whole composition is set over a border made up of a lattice design which is also originally inlaid with lapis lazuli.

The theme of a lion devouring or mauling a man is found in Egyptian art where it occurs mainly on scenes which symbolize the triumph of the pharaoh over his enemies. The enemy being always represented by the victim or the prey on which the beast

¹Barnett: op.cit., p. 140.

²Ibid., p. 190.

springs. The subject is also found in the Phoenician hunting scenes on metal works, such as the bowl from Curium in Cyprus,¹ where they probably did not have a particular meaning like the Egyptian, and were only part of the hunting scene itself. From Phoenicia the theme spread to the west where it was assimilated in the artistic repertoires of the Greeks.

Another piece of ivory from Nimrud which is both interesting in style and meaning is the medallion shaped panel on which two griffins are carved nibbling at the branches of a Sacred Tree (Pl. XXIX, 1). The Sacred Tree consists of a large trunk in the middle from the base of which protrude two stems surmounted by two papyrus flowers. From the two upper volutes of the trunk six stems of papyrus sprout, three on each side of the trunk. A large oval motif which follows the outline of the panel, and terminates in two small volutes at the top of the panel is flush with the uppermost part of the volutes of the trunk and is connected with it by a chevron pattern which springs from between the two drooping volutes and extends upwards till it meets the inner border of the oval shaped motif. The latter is carved in a trough and seems to have been inlaid with colored insets. In the inner curve of this large volute if we may call it so, stand two griffins back to back with their heads raised upwards in the attitude of picking at the fruits of the Sacred Tree. The fantastic creatures are

¹H. Frankfort: The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient, Fig. 98.

crested, and have the curling lock which falls on one side of its head. This griffin is Phoenician in that it is inherited from the griffin of the Second Millennium ivories which was itself an imitation of the Aegean proto-type. It also differed from the Assyrian griffin which had a demon like expression, with very strong musculature.¹

The griffin derives from Syrian art. The fantastic creature has the body of a lion, and the head of an eagle or falcon. The falcon-headed griffin appears in Egypt in the late predynastic period on a late palette, but as from the Fifth Dynasty on it starts having a definite function of its own. It is the "crusher" of the pharaoh's enemies. The early griffin differs from the crested Aegean griffin which appears for the first time on the battle-axe of the founder of the Eighteenth Dynasty, Ahmes I. He is now designated as the beloved of the war god Menthu.² The Egyptian word which designates the griffin as "crusher" is not of Egyptian but Semitic origin and represents the Canaanite-Hebrew root which meant to "burn", the griffin is a burning creature, and is thus related to the sun-god as is attested at Karatepe by the figure of a man with a griffin's head and four wings up lifting the winged disc which represented the sun.³ In Phoenician and Syrian art the griffin is associated with the Sacred Tree.

¹Barnett: op.cit., p. 74.

²H. Frankfort, "Notes on the Cretan Griffin", A.B.S.A. Vol. XXXVII (1936-7), p. 112.

³Barnett: op.cit., p. 75.

The vegetative motif which is usually associated with either animals or human beings is generally called the Sacred Tree. Some scholars see in this fanciful creation "The Tree of Life" of the Garden of Eden, and the fruits of which granted immortality. However it is more appropriate and less misleading to refer to this motif which occurs in Phoenician art as the Sacred Tree.

The Phoenician Sacred Tree was generally associated with human figures and animals - the animals are usually either sphinxes or griffins - arranged symmetrically on either side of it. The tree itself may be represented by different but highly stylized vegetative motifs such as the lotus plant (Pl. XXVIII, 1), the papyrus stem (Pl. XXIX, 2, Pl. XXIV, 2) and a superposition of Phoenician palmettes (Pl. XX, 1). The tree is sometimes represented by an Egyptian djed sign or a mere decorative design made of a combination of small and big volutes with the addition of a plant such as the papyrus flower as it occurs on the panel bearing the two griffins from Nimrud. (Pl. XXIX, 1)

The Phoenician or Cypro-Phoenician palmette which occurs in the Second and First Millennium B.C. consists primarily of a bundle of palms with stiff lines and no indications of nervures or foliole, placed on a semi-circle which is repeated on the interior by similar smaller semi-circles parallel to the outer one. Another arcade which is usually flush with the palm motif, terminates in two small volutes at both ends.¹ The motif has

¹Danthine: Le Palmier Dattier et l'Arbre Sacré dans l'Icographie de l'Asie Occidentale Ancienne, p. 208.

been described as Cypro-Phoenician because it occurs in both places and it is as yet impossible to separate Cypriote art from Phoenician art, because the same composite style where Egyptian, Aegean, Hittite and Mesopotamian motifs merged and mingled closely, is found both in Phoenicia and Cyprus.¹

The Phoenician palmette underwent certain modifications when Phoenicia came into very close contact with Egypt, that is during the Eighteenth Dynasty and later when both countries borrowed freely from the artistic repertoires of each other. Egyptian motifs such as the lily plant and the papyrus were introduced in the Phoenician composition since the Second Millennium B.C. as attested by the Sacred Tree on the Gold Cup from Ras Shamra where two superimposed lilies begin the palmette. The tradition continued down into the First Millennium where the Egyptian influence recurs also on the representations of the palmette (Pl. XXI, 1; Pl. XXVII, 1; Pl. XX, 2).

The Egyptian influence modified the form of the typically Phoenician Sacred Tree but it is not likely that it also changed its significance, because the tree itself was still part of a composition which originated in Mesopotamia. Yet one doubts whether it still had a religious significance or whether it had become a simple decorative motif, especially in the First Millennium where the ivory-carver was probably not subjected to the religious ideas of Mesopotamia. Moreover during the First Millennium the Phoenician or Cypro-Phoenician art had

¹Danthine: op.cit., p. 209.

become essentially commercial in which the themes were adapted to the taste of the clients.¹ However it is to be noted that the nature and attitude of the creatures which accompany this plant motif give it its somewhat religious significance. The sanctity of the Tree originated from its association with animals especially the goats, the latter herbivores being the attributes of the fertility gods; the association of the goats with the tree give the latter motif a religious expression which is also related to fertility and fertility cults. This relationship of gods, goats and trees originated in Mesopotamia whence it spread to the neighbouring countries where it probably acquired local interpretations. If the Phoenicians associated the sphinx and the griffin with their Sacred Tree they must have done that in accordance with their own mythology.

In Assyrian times the tree had a prophylactic value for the idea of fertility brings out the idea of power and prosperity which could at any time suppress the forces of evil. The fantastic creatures in Assyria were represented as guardians protecting the tree and augmenting its prophylactic value just as the goats were associated with it in order to increase its beneficial value.² On this last evidence, the Nimrud ivory panel could have been executed by a Phoenician artisan who meant to reproduce an Assyrian belief, in the Phoenician style of ivory-carving.

¹Ibid., p. 156.

²Danthine: op.cit., p. 159.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The attempt which has been made in the previous chapters to study the origin and meaning of the imagery on the ivory-carvings of the Phoenicians has led the present writer to arrive at a tentative three-fold theory about the art of the Phoenicians. In the first place the Phoenicians borrowed their motifs from their neighbours, especially from Egypt. Secondly, the motifs borrowed were cast in a new mould and reproduced in their own style and thus clothed in a new garb. Thirdly, the art of the Phoenicians was primarily a religious art.

The geographical position of Phoenicia may be considered as a major cause or condition in the formation of its political history which in turn helped in shaping its cultural and artistic expressions. The difficulty in land transportation in the Third Millennium B.C. gave priority to the countries in which vessels were available to get in contact with the Phoenician ports. Egypt was in fact the first to set a strong foothold in the Phoenician port of Byblos. Trade relations were established between the two countries in which timber from the mountains of the Lebanon was exchanged for luxury items from Egypt. The works of art which

were discovered at Byblos must have been either imported Egyptian goods or local imitations of the same. In the latter case, we could say that the people living in this part of the world before the appearance of the Proto-Phoenician Canaanites sometime around the Twenty Third Century B.C. were faithful imitators of the Egyptian artisans.

It is not until the beginning of the Second Millennium B.C., or even a bit later, that Phoenician art really appears as a composite art as already explained in the Introduction. There were historical reasons which were largely responsible for the creation of this art which was to retain its composite character throughout the Second Millennium B.C. and later into the First Millennium B.C. as well. The mass movements of the Twenty Third Century B.C. changed the face of the whole Near East. First the onslaught of the Semitic Amorites and later the arrival of the non-Semitic Hurrians around the Twentieth Century caused a stir which aroused the local inhabitants from their lethargy, and led to the formation of new nations, amongst others the Canaanites who established themselves along the Phoenician coast. The balance of power in the Middle East was maintained by Egypt under the Middle Kingdom on the one hand, and by Hammurabi in Mesopotamia on the other. The reigning peace and relative prosperity of the time encouraged interland communications between the different countries in the Near East. Evidence of this fact may be detected at Byblos where great discoveries were made going back to this period.

These finds, such as the gold dagger and hilt, reflect already the composite character of the Phoenician art, and include amongst others Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Syrian influence. Discussion of Phoenician art is only possible as from the Second Millennium B.C. when it first appears as a composite art. This characterization becomes even more definite in the second half of the Millennium when the Aegean influence starts to manifest itself in a more prominent manner in the Phoenician works of art, amongst others the ivory-carvings which were found at Ras Shamra and Megiddo.

Ivory-carving is one of the principal crafts through which Phoenician art manifests itself. An independent school of carving arose in Phoenicia when local sources of ivory became available. The task of the artisan was facilitated when the elephant appeared in North Syria. It is further supposed that it is due to the proximity of the raw material that a local school of ivory-carving flourished and became active independently of the Egyptian school. However the collections of ivories were not found on Phoenician sites but in prosperous cities of the neighbouring countries. The adventurous spirit of the Phoenicians or Proto-Phoenician Canaanites led them to travel far and wide in the ancient world and to carry their arts and crafts into friendly courts. The Phoenician artisans were either established in the cities foreign to them such as Megiddo, or were called upon by the friendly monarchs to visit their cities and to execute for them beautiful and sumptuous pieces of furniture inlaid with ivory.

The ivory-carving in the Second Millennium B.C. is variable in technique and motif. Sculpture in the round, high and low relief, incision are all found in the collections of this period. Furthermore there is a great variety in the borrowed motifs : Egyptian, Syrian, Mesopotamian, Hittite and Aegean influences are found in these ivory-carvings. The Egyptian influence which is actually the strongest, occurs directly and indirectly in them. It is true that the Phoenicians were not original in that they represented other people's inventions and devices, however their originality and individualism lay in their choice of the best from the artistic repertoires of the different countries and the regrouping of the borrowed themes in a manner which was very special to them and which conformed to their ideas, purposes and motives. They for instance assimilated the Egyptian lotus flower which in the Second Millennium B.C. was explained according to the manner in which an individual held it. If upright, as it appears on the ivory inlay from Megiddo, it meant that the person holding it is alive and happy. If downward, it signified that the person holding it was dead. In the First Millennium B.C. the lotus flower was sometimes considered as a Sacred Tree. The lotus flower which was an emblem of Upper Egypt acquired different meanings at the hands of the Phoenician artisan. The latter copied motifs intelligently, as the representations of the borrowed themes were not done blindly but were imitated according to the

Phoenicians' thoughts and motives.

Another example is the sphinx which reached Phoenicia indirectly. The Egyptian sphinx was first introduced in to Syria where it acquired certain characteristics. The fantastic animal became a winged female sphinx which was attributed to the goddess Ashtarte in Phoenicia. The Phoenicians represented the animal in the standing position. This habit started in the Second Millennium B.C. and continued down into the First Millennium B.C. where it almost appears as such on the ivories from Samaria, Arslan Tash and Nimrud. One would never mistake a Phoenician sphinx for an Egyptian, Syrian or Assyrian type. For once the facial features are a good clue to detect the difference. The Syrian example has always wide protuberant eyes and a long prominent nose. The Egyptian would certainly have slanting eyes. The Assyrian on the other hand would look hard and savage in expression with an evident musculature. Another Phoenician characteristic concerning the sphinx, is that it was the first to associate the animal with the Sacred Tree.

A third example concerning the Phoenician initiative in their ivory-carving is the Sacred Tree. The old age Mesopotamian tradition led them to invent a motif of their own. The palmette was a Phoenician invention. This original motif was further modified by them when they introduced Egyptian trends in the composition. The result of these combinations is not heterogenous as one would expect it to be, on the

contrary the composition appears balanced and homogenous.

The Phoenicians who excelled in their representations of a composite art may be further given the credit for their artistic execution of the themes when the latter are compared to those of the other countries such as Syria and Assyria where art does not appear in the lenient and movemental style of the Phoenicians. The Phoenician ivory-carvings reflect harmony in proportions and skill in execution, although they sometimes lack perspective as it appears on the Potnea Theron carved on the pyxis lid from Minet el Beida. However this point is counterbalanced by the naturalistic expression of the representations. This feeling for reality is undoubtedly due to the Aegean influence which started to assert itself on the Eastern mainland as from the Fifteenth Century B.C. where convincing evidence of it is found on the gold bowl and gold cup from Ras Shamra. The sensation for life and movement in the ivories is one of the major points of this art, and it is mostly due to it that the different motifs were grouped in such a way as to produce an universal whole, lacking the heterogenous state one would have expected to see in their combination. Furthermore this harmonious whole had a meaning to the Phoenicians, for certain representations were related in one way or another to their mythology. The combat between animals is related to what really happened in nature. The struggle between the gods and the resulting cyclic movement of the seasons is reproduced in their art by the struggle between animals which were rendered in the Phoenician style.

Around the beginning of the Twelfth Century B.C., the coming of the Peoples of the Sea changed the face of the Near East again. The Aegeans provoked a deep change in the set up of the populations in this part of the world. New nations arose such as the Phoenicians in which the Aegean element was very strong. Phoenicia witnessed her Golden Age in the Eleventh Century B.C. which lasted down to around the middle of the Sixth Century B.C. The new folk travelled far and wide establishing colonies and factories on the shores of the Mediterranean. Phoenician arts and crafts were transplanted into different countries and cities where Phoenician workmanship was appreciated. The Phoenician art of this Millennium may be studied outside Phoenicia where Phoenician ivories and metal works have been actually found.

The ivories of the First Millennium B.C. besides their artistic importance are also politically significant. They are an additional proof that Egyptian cultural influence was still strongly felt in the Ninth and Eighth Centuries B.C. in the Ancient Orient in spite of Egypt's political bankruptcy. Egyptian themes rendered in the Egyptian style of cloisonné work were part of the artistic repertoire of the Phoenician ivories in this Millennium. Moreover typically Egyptian themes such as the binding of a tree were rendered in the Phoenician style to express ideas and themes related to their Mythology.

There is continuity in the ivory repertoires of the Second and First Millennia. The griffin, the sphinx, and the

Sacred Tree are amongst others, the themes which were reproduced in the two consecutive millennia. Moreover the Phoenician art of the First Millennium B.C. continued to produce composite works of art. However the circle of motifs becomes more restricted, yet there is a variety in the representations of identical motifs, for instance the sphinx is represented in different ways and from different angles. The ivory-carvings of the First Millennium B.C. tend to become more conventional and artificial in appearance than those of the previous Millennium. The general impression one would have about the artistic execution of these ivories is that they reflect a high naturalistic expression, but lack the feeling of perspective like those of the Second Millennium and sometimes have no feeling for form. Evidence of the last point is found in the representation bearing the figures of the two seated persons around a cartouche from Nimrud, where the hands of the two persons are rendered in the same way so as have two right hands or two left hands. The general impression of uneasiness, that is the feeling that a person is not comfortable in his attitude, when one looks at the several motifs bearing the figure of the two genii flanking a central motif from Arslan Tash. Nevertheless, these bad points are always counterbalanced by the skillful reproduction of different motifs in a specially recognizable Phoenician style.

Before ending this chapter, it should be noted that a student who is interested to study Phoenician art as manifested in their ivory-carvings must not be rash in judging it as being

a mere copying of foreign motifs and themes. On the contrary, the Phoenician must be given credit with the more difficult task of grouping the borrowed motifs in an original manner so as to produce a harmonious whole which in its turn reproduces the constructive ideas of the Phoenicians that are related to their Mythology, legends and rituals.

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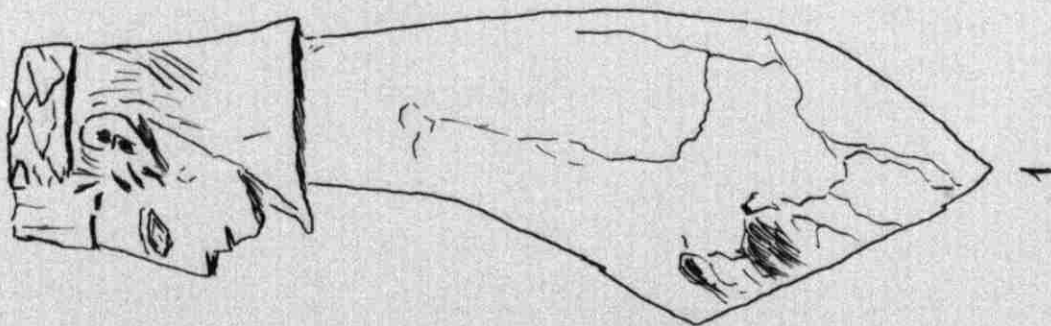
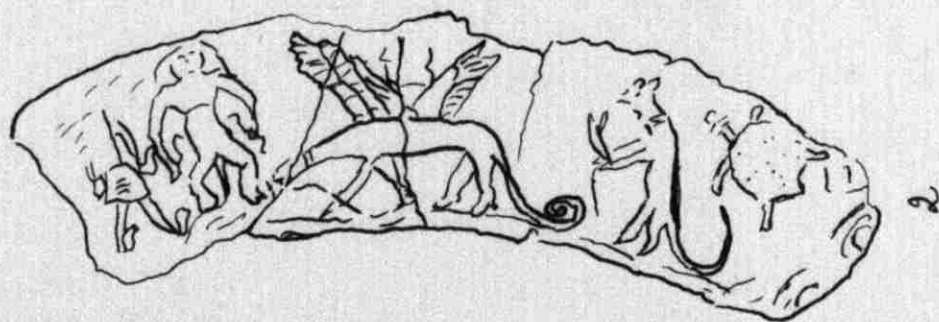
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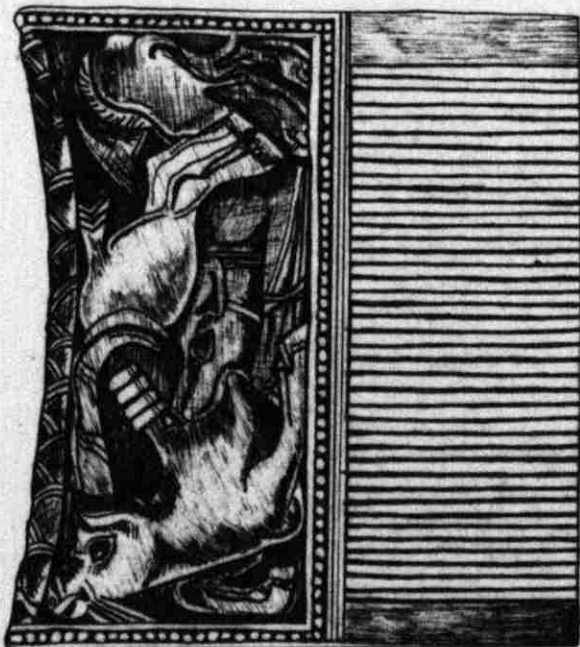
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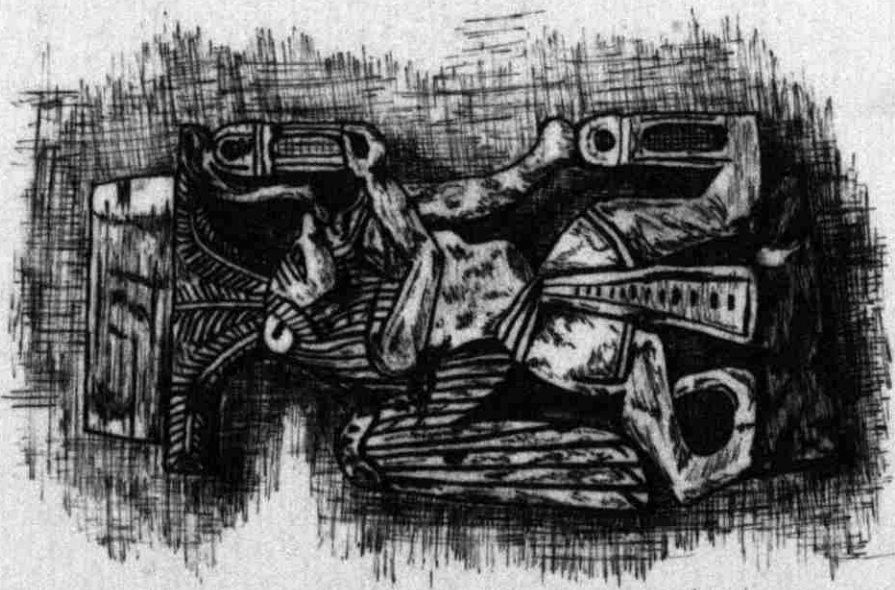


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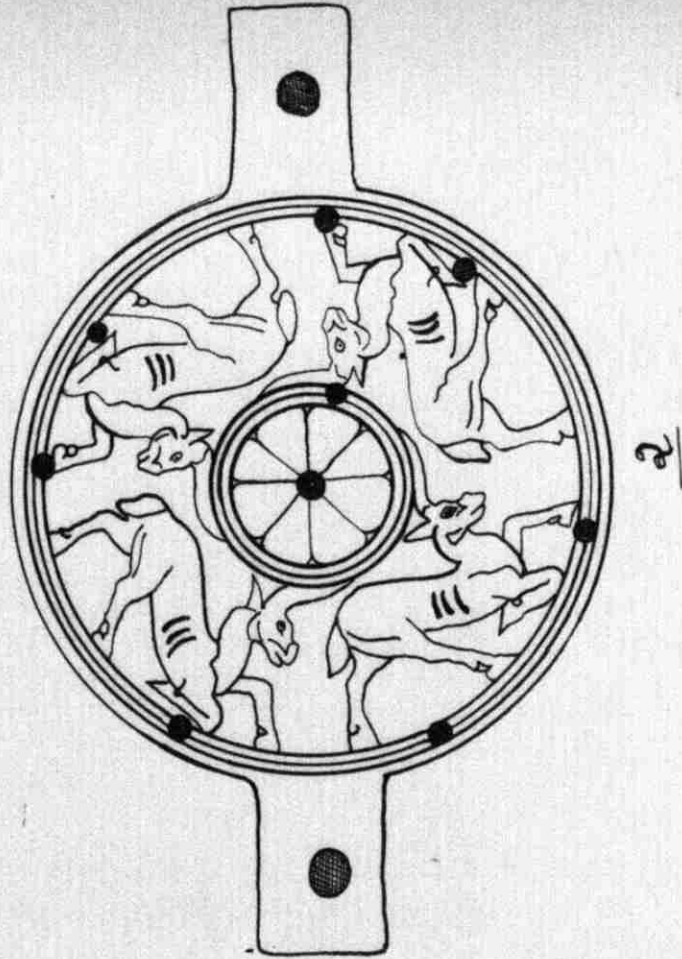


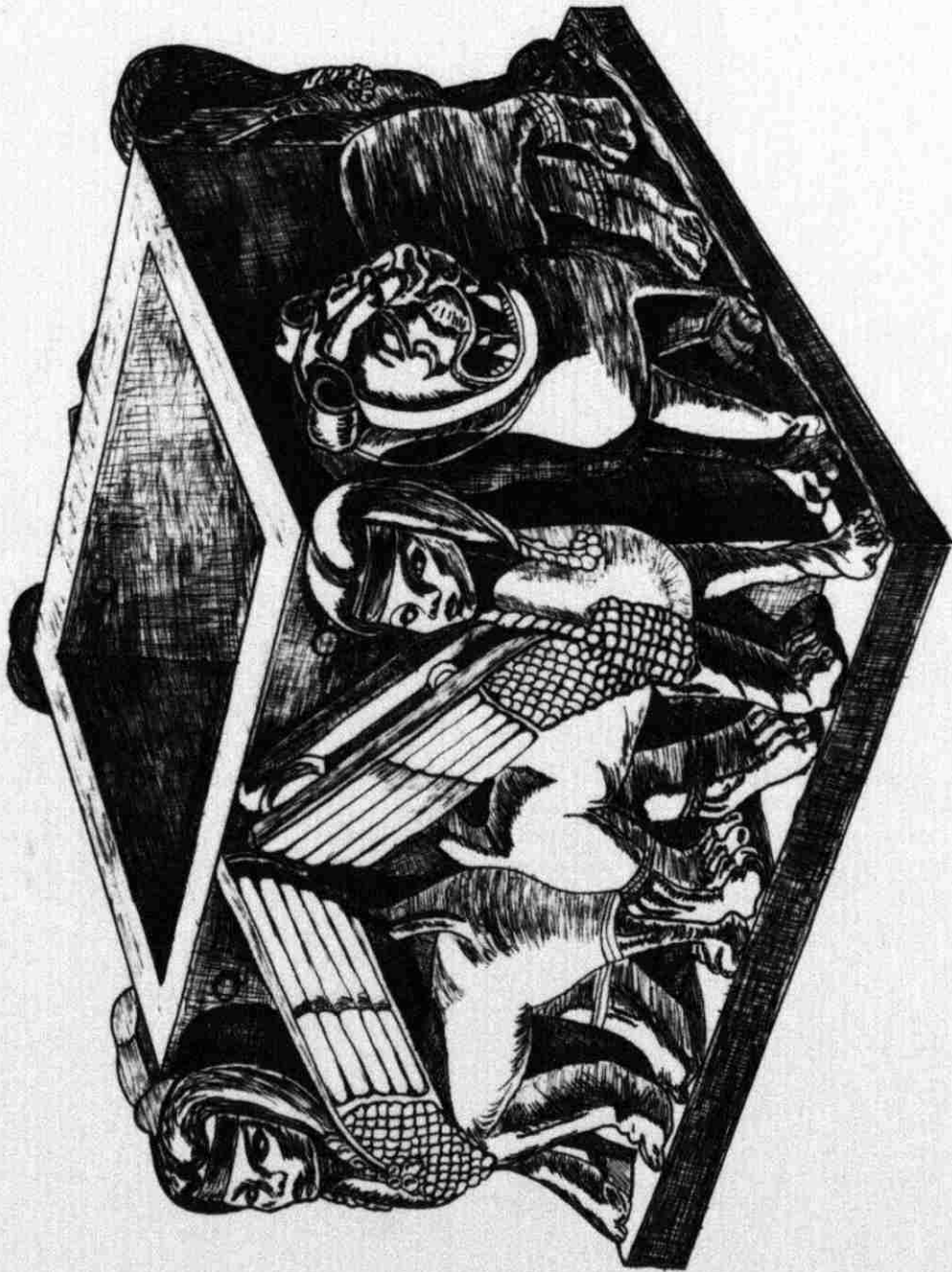


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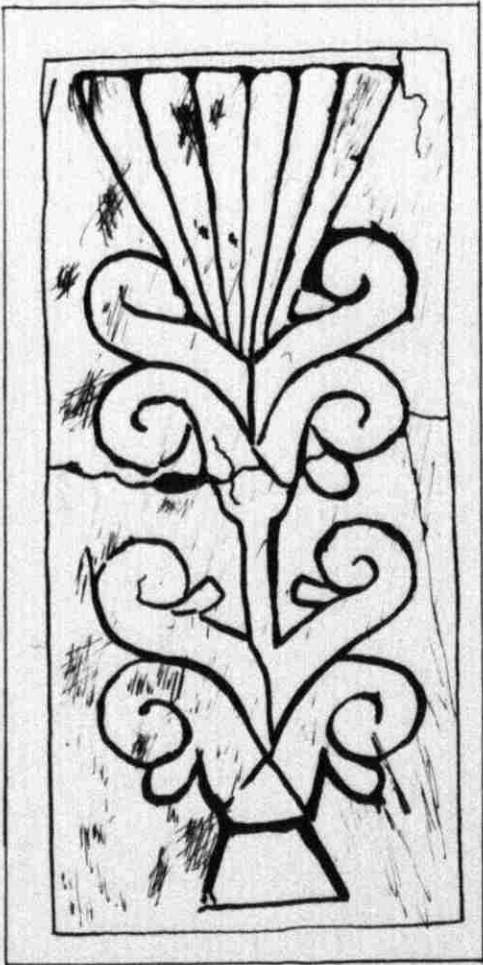
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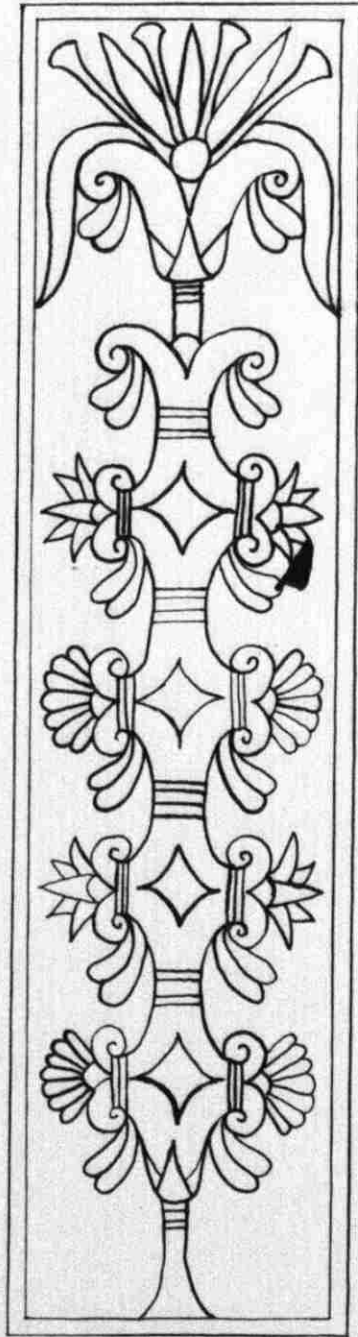








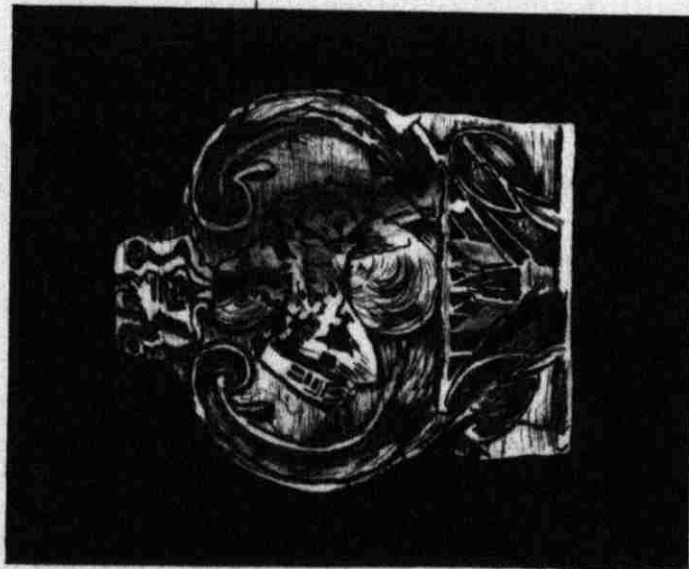
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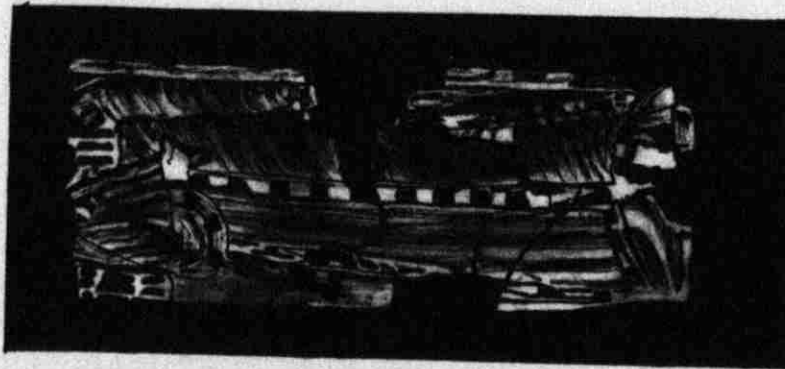
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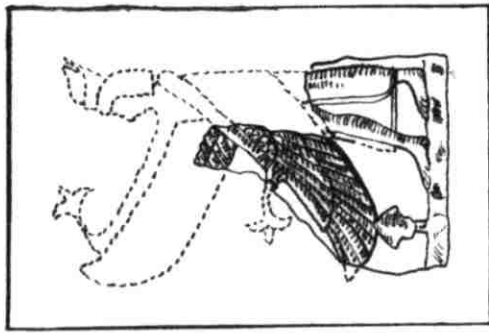
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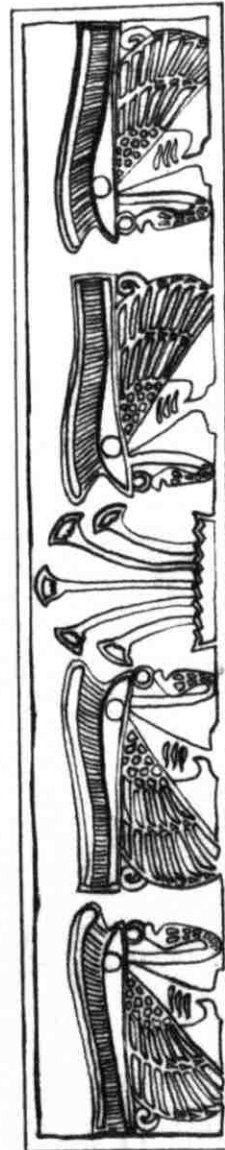
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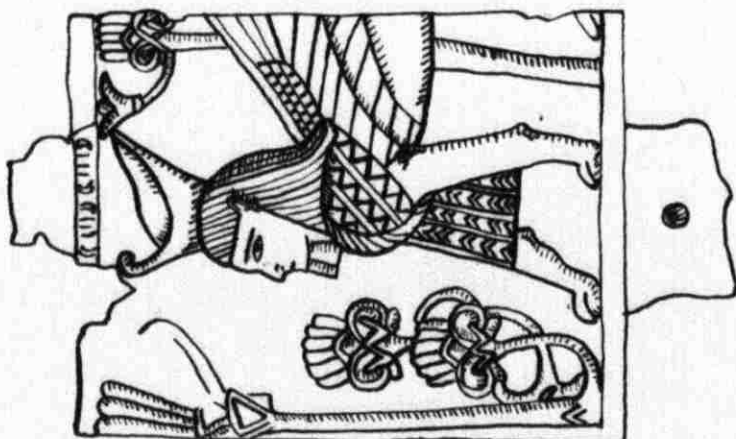
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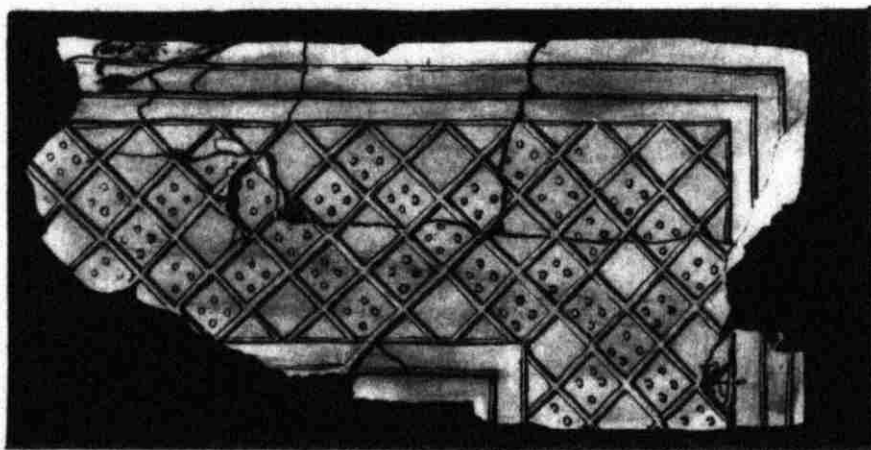
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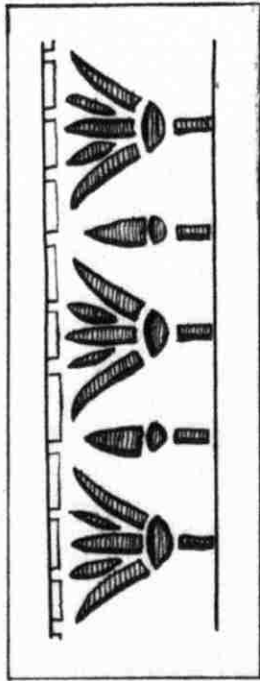
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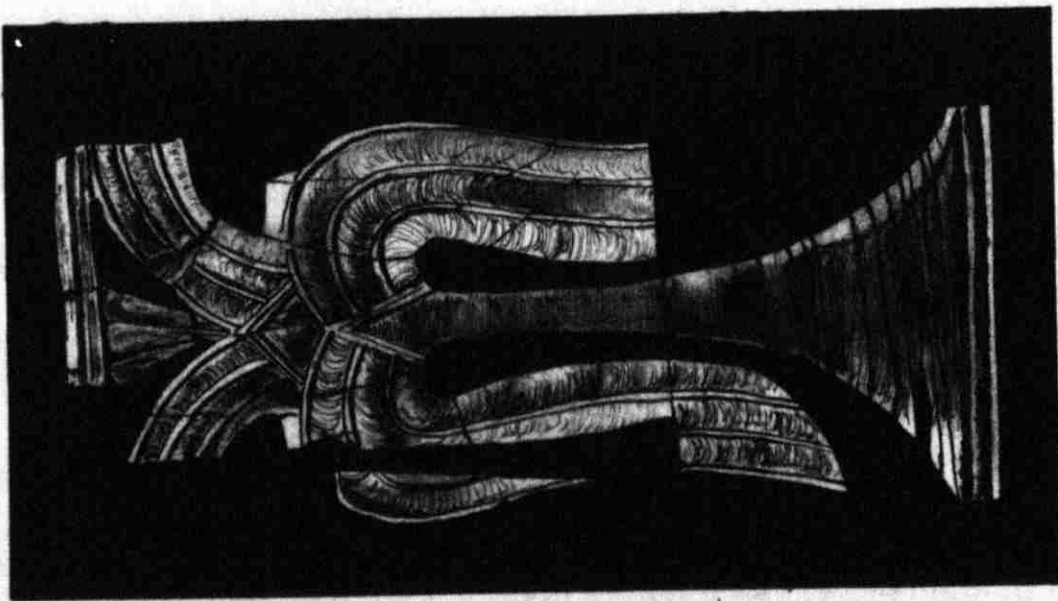
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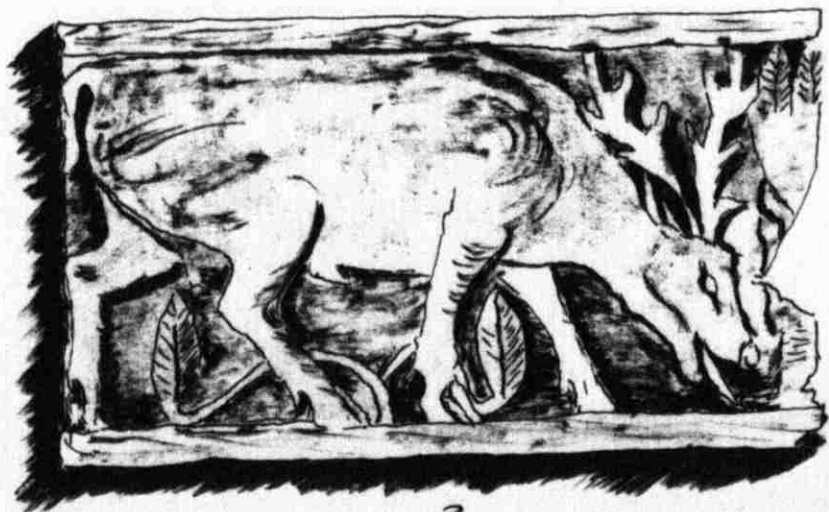
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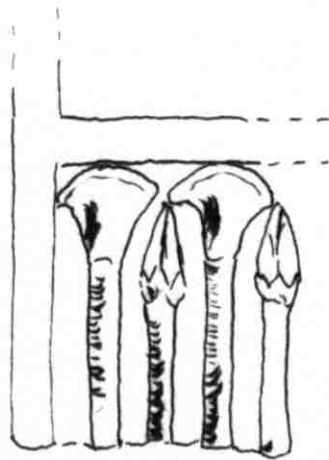
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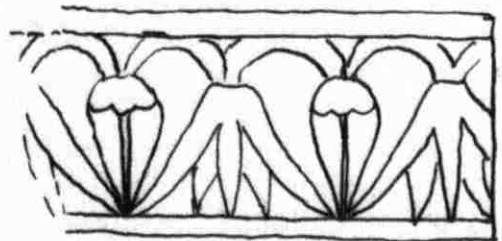
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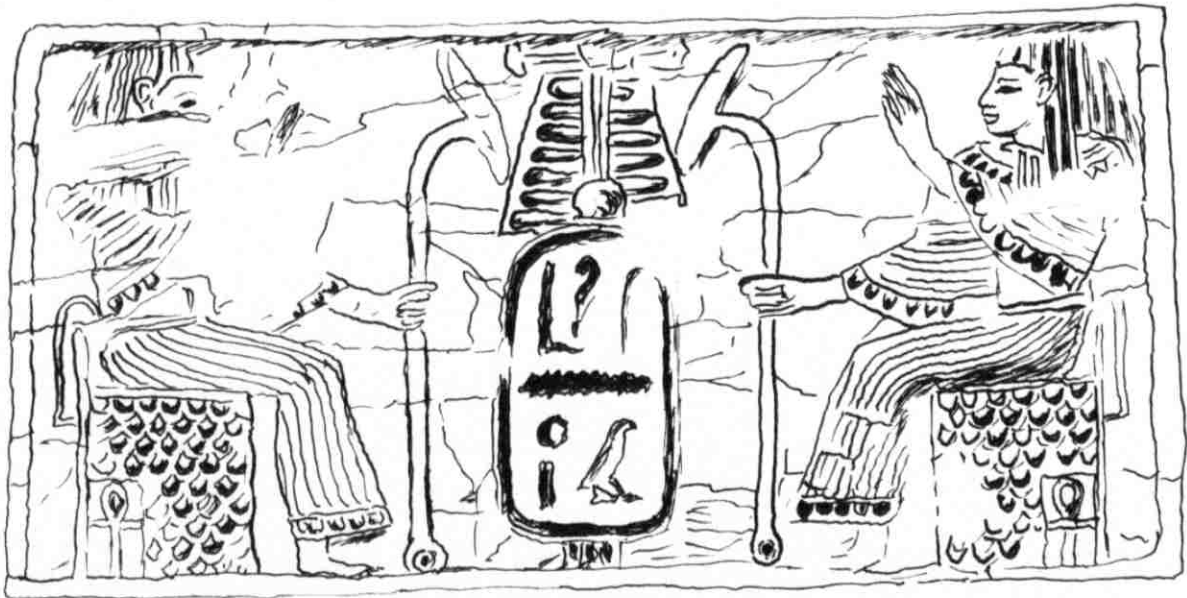
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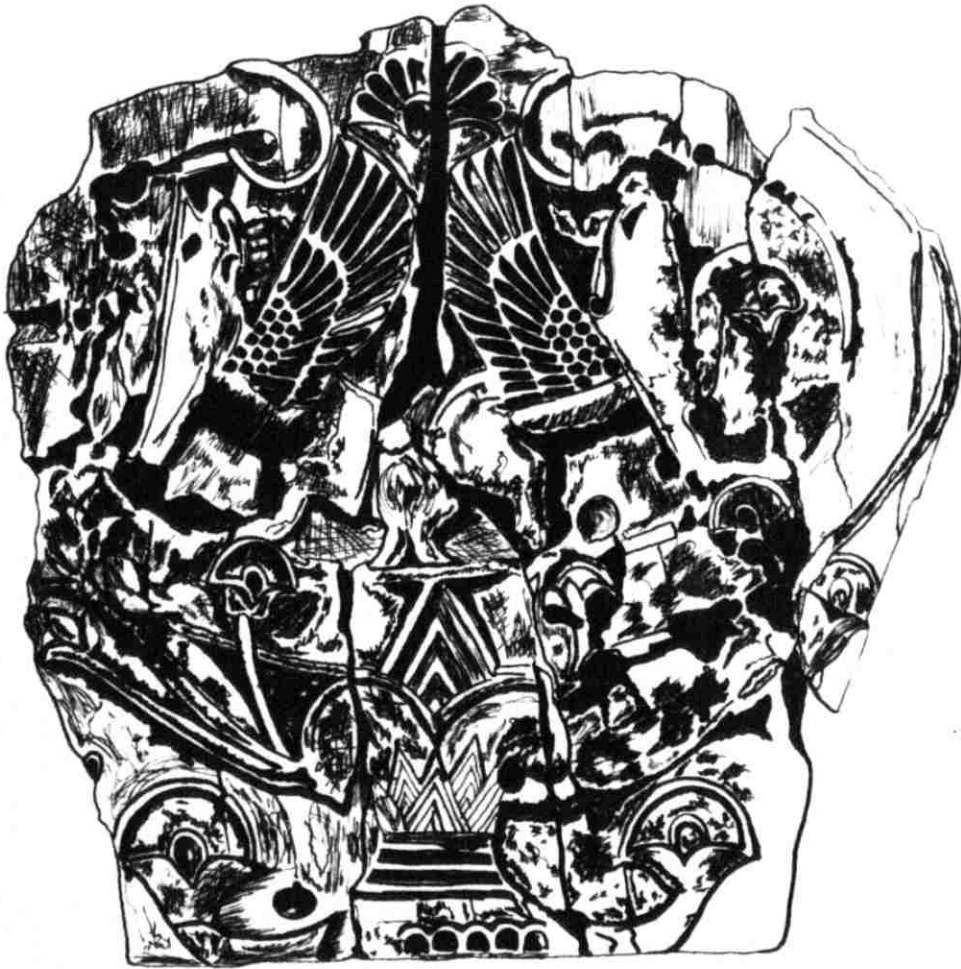


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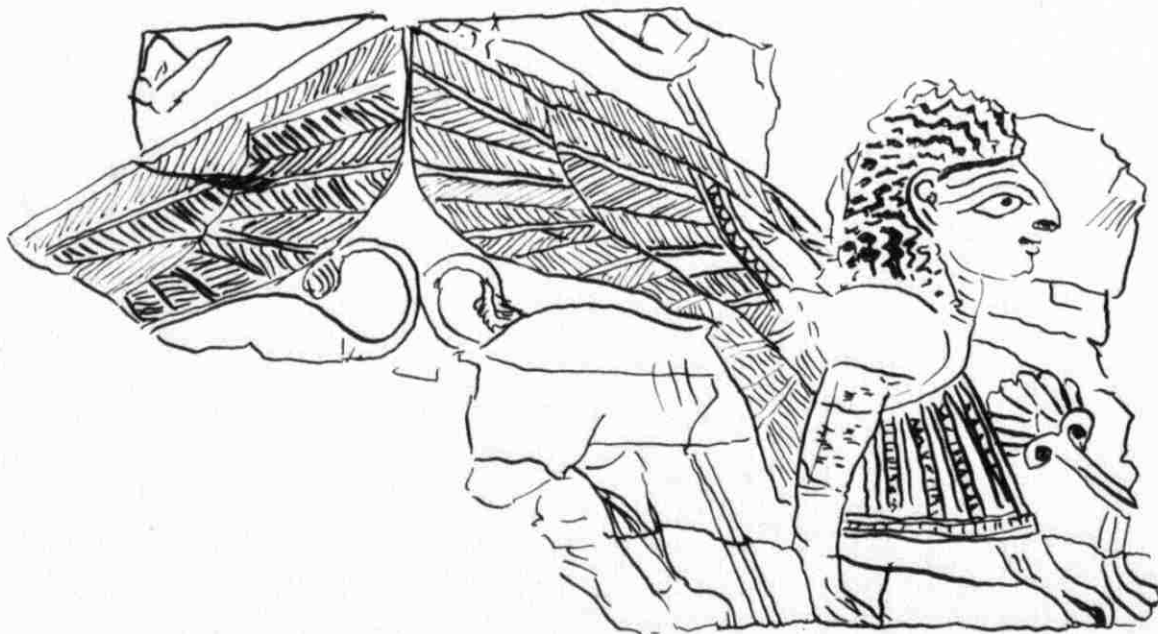
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