Dagan

I. Introduction. Syrian god. D. is the forerunner of the Syro-Levantine god →Dagon, known in biblical texts as chief deity of Ashdod (1 Sam 5). There is no definite representation of D. from Palestine/Israel. Even in the Middle Euphrates region, the heartland of D., his identification in documents dating to the 3rd and 2nd mill. is not easy. There are no extant depictions from the 1st mill. The iconographic identification of D. by inscription is presently not possible. The only candidate, a cylinder seal impression from Emar (BEYER 2001: no. A85) with the hieroglyphs Ta-Ka inscribed in front of a standing winged god, should be rejected, according to BEYER (2001: 3121), as cylinder seals rarely depict and invoke the same god.

The difficulty of iconographically identifying D. is highlighted by the fact that archaeologists have never attempted to establish representations of D. This stands in sharp contrast to his prominent role as head of the West Semitic pantheon, as documented in written sources.

D.’s name does not provide any clue for iconographic identification since the name’s origin and meaning remain unknown. Etymological connections with Arab. dagana (“to be cloudy, rainy”) and West Semitic dgn/dagan (“grain”) or dg (“fish”), relating to his role as a storm, grain, or (putative) fish god, are debatable. The connection with →fish, if relevant at all, seems to be late (WYATT 1980: 376 [Karatepe bilingual = dEa] and cf. below, § II.1.A.1 final section). D.’s aspects as a vegetation deity or →storm god (SINGER 1992: 437) do not exclude each other, as both are related phenomena in the rain farming zone. The underworld character of D., stressed by HEALEY 1977 on the basis of kispum- and pagra’um-offerings, may be one feature of any principal deity of a certain region. Two aniconic stelae from Ugarit that mention pagra’um-offerings to D. (YON 1991: 301-303, nos. 7-8, figs. 7:7, 8, 14b) were found in the courtyard of a temple. As a result, the temple has been attributed to D. This does not imply, however, that the stelae should be regarded as aniconic representations of D.

The starting point of D.’s iconographic identification has to be the reasonable supposition that D. should be represented within the area where he was worshipped as the highest god, at least from Early Bronze Age to Late Bronze Age. On the basis of textual evidence, D.’s homeland is considered to be the middle Euphrates region, approximately from the border of the Taurus mountain to Mari with major cultic centers at Tutu, Terqa, Emar, Mari, and others in neighboring regions. In this area D. was called bēl mātim (“lord of the land”). By the late 3rd mill., personal names with the theophoric element D. are attested at Ebla (PETTINATO/WEATZOLD 1985) and Emara (ARCHI 1990: 23). Sargon I (2340-2284 BCE) and Aarams in Akkad (2223-2198 BCE) attribute the conquest of the “upper land” to the efforts of D. of Tutu (FRAYNE 1993: 2.1.1.11, 2.1.4.26). D.’s position is that of the “father of the gods” (FELIU 2003: 240ff), a role which compares to →Enil in the Mesopotamian, Kumari in the Hurrian, and →El in the Ugaritic pantheon. Accordingly, one should expect similarity in visual representation for these gods. Unfortunately, however, the iconography of the aforementioned gods is not clearly defined. Hence D.’s attributes mentioned in texts are the only indications that may offer some insight into his iconography.

II. Typology

II.1. Phenotypes A. ANTHROPOMORPHIC 1. ENTHRONED (1-23, →Mountain god 25-26) 2. STANDING (24-38) B. ANICONIC: POSSIBLE

A. ANTHROPOMORPHIC

1. ENTHRONED. Depicted either frontally or in profile, D. sits on a throne, which stands on a pedestal or mountain range. His feet rest on a footstool or an animal (commonly a →lion). Enthroned D. is usually bearded and wears a long garment and ovoid or conical cap, which may have several pairs of horns. In his hand D. may hold a weapon and/or a vessel.

The “throne of D.” appears in Mari texts (dated to c. 1760) as a gift from Zimri-Lim (1775-1759) to D. (DOSSIN 1964: nos. 5:5; 47:6; 110:8; DURAND 1983: no. 292). These references point to a seated form of the god’s statue, as does the instruction in DOSSIN 1978: no. 62 that king Zimri-Lim should kiss D.’s foot. The enthroned position (WINTER 1986: 255: “the very act of sitting is synonymous with status in the ancient Near East”), his attributes, and the find spots of the examples in the main cult centers of D. suggest that the following depictions should be identified with him.

Several molded plaques from “Zimri-Lim’s” palace at Mari (1*•3*) show an enthroned bearded god with Kaunakes garment and ovoid headdress with three pairs of horns, holding both hands in front of his chest. Middle Bronze Age terracotta figurines of the “Orontes group” showing enthroned, bearded male figures may be

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compared to these examples (4; BADRE 1980: 54, type MAIV 1a).

A Late Bronze Age molded terracotta figure (5), frontally depicting an enthroned god in a long Syrian mantle and fourfold horned cap, was found at Tall Munbaqa beside what was likely the city’s main temple. Similar figurines are attested at Emar (6) and Unm el-Marra (7). The latter’s oval head resembles the well-known basalt head found at nearby Jabbul (BOSSERT 1951: nos. 434-435), which therefore may be tentatively identified with D. The head could be part of a D. statue in the temple of Hakkulan, midway between the Euphrates and Halap (FELIU 2003: 139-141). At least three different molded terracotta plaques from Munbaqa and Emar (8*-11) depict an enthroned person in profile with a conical horned cap and a beard, which seems crudely attached (10 has been misinterpreted as goddess because the beard was overlooked). D. holds a lituus (i.e., a curved staff) and a vessel in his hands, while his feet rest on a footstool (missing on 8*).

The socle rendered as a mountain or simplified as hatched rows on 2*-3* could relate to D.’s epithet “the great mountain,” kur-gal = šadû rabû (cf. a bilingual letter from Mari mentioning “Dagan, the great mountain, the father of the great gods” [FLEMING 1994: 17f; FELIU 2003: 240ff]; logographic writing “KUR alongside syllabic d’Da-gan at Late Bronze Age Emar, Hadidi, and Munbaqa). The supreme position of D. in the region between Emar and Carchemish and dominant Jebel Aruda has led to the consideration of whether his seat should be assumed to be on mountains, e.g., on Jebel Aruda (MAYER 2001: 9). On a Classical (OTTO 2000: 35) Syrian cylinder seal from the Carchemish region (12), a god is enthroned in a shrine supported by four small figurines, possibly an abbreviated rendering of →mountain gods. On other Classical Syrian seals the enthroned god could also be interpreted as D. on the basis of associated mountain gods (→Mountain god 25-26).

From Sargonic times onward, texts mention the “weapon of D.” which helps to defeat the enemies (see § 1). D.’s weapon retains its importance during the 2nd millennium, both in a figurative sense – for military support of the kings (e.g., Iahdun-Lim [1825-1810] claims that he gained control of the land of the banks of the Euphrates by “the mighty weapon” of D. [FRAYNE 1990: E4.6.8]; D. helps Zimri-Lim in war [Dossin 1938: 110; Dossin 1978: no. 62] – and in a more concrete sense as an attribute of the god’s statue. A GIŠ.TUKUL is produced for several statues of D. (DURAND 1983 no. 289; KUPPER 1983: no. 247). One of several economic texts from Mari dealing with the fabrication of D.’s weapon mentions its curved form (FELIU 2003: 1311).

Contemporary North Syrian cylinder seals (13-17) depict an enthroned figure with flounced garment on a pedestal, holding a curved weapon/lituus, and receiving offerings or adoration. Cylinder seal impressions of the “Anatolian group” at Karum Kanis II and Ib (18*) show a seated, armed figure as the focus of adoration from various standing gods. His throne frequently stands on a pedestal (19) or is carried by →lions (20). Because the same bearded god with an axe, lions, and goats appears in one case standing in a battlefield, ÖZGÜÇ (1965: 66) and VAN LOON (1985: 6) have identified him as a war god and suggested that his Hittite name could have been Yarri. However, since Yarri was only a minor deity, this identification is less probable than that of D., who was known at Külettepe (SCHMÖKEL 1934: 99). Some Late Bronze Age cylinder seals from Emar, where D. was the main god, illustrate his role as father of the gods. The →storm god, one of D.’s sons, and the sun god (→Solar deities) (or →King [ANE]?) approach enthroned D. (21*), the seal of the important diviner Baal-malik. Others show enthroned D. with standing gods of lower rank (22-23).

The same iconographic tradition is perpetuated by the only Iron Age statue of an enthroned bearded god, holding an axe in one hand and a club in the other. The socle shows a bird-headed demon mastering two lions. This god of the “King’s Gate” at Carchemish is identified by inscription as Astar-suha/Atrisuhhas (probably a deified royal ancestor; HAWKINS 2000: 100f, pls. 12-13) but certainly corresponds to the figurative type represented by D.

A final consideration already touched upon is whether D. was sometimes depicted with the attributes of →Ea/Enki (i.e., holding a flowing vessel, surrounded by streams of water and fish, and seated on a throne with lion’s legs) and associated creatures (such as Usumia, naked heroes, etc.; UEHLINGER 1992: 352f). Due to the fixed iconography of the water god on Classical Syrian seals, which nearly all originate from Yamhad (OTTO 2000: 220f), and since Ea played a considerable role in Syria, e.g., Mari (LAMBERT 1985: 537f), it seems more accurate to assume two independent deities. Still, certain characteristics and attributes may have been transferred from

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one to the other because of their comparable position within the pantheon.

2. STANDING. This phenotype includes figurines with a conical headgear and arm stumps extending in front of the body. The ends of the arm stumps are vertically perforated and probably held weapons (24-29), which are rarely preserved (curved staff on 24), or other items. A beard is only occasionally indicated (25, 28). Sometimes a simple necklace (26*) or collar (24-25, 27-28) is worn, but no additional jewelry. The conical cap is often decorated with short vertical or oblique strokes in rows (apparently simplified horns 28); attached horns are rare (27). Long hair may fall down the figure’s back (26*). Since the lower part of the body is shaped like a pillar, the garment’s length is unclear.

A male terracotta figurine wearing a conical cap with pointed or flattened end is widely attested in the Middle Euphrates and Orontes regions during late Early Bronze Age and early Middle Bronze Age. His headdress, coiffure, and posture strongly resemble those of the Syrian storm god →IlHadad, whose iconography came to be canonized only later. It is the only male figurine type in D.’s heartland and appears in large numbers. Of those figurines (e.g., 26*; not including the headless pieces) 99 were found at D.’s main Early Bronze Age cult center of Tuttul, totalling 40% of all anthropomorphic figurines found (the others being female types). These figurines could refer to cult statues of D. and his consort Shala/shalash, mentioned in the earliest attestations of D. in texts from Ebla (24th cent.; SCHWEMER 2001: 94-96). Several hundred similar figurines from the Middle Euphrates and adjacent regions (24-33) point to the identification of this type of figurine with D., at least in this area.

Similar to these terracotta figurines are bearded and armed bronze figurines from Judeideh with conical/round headresses (BRAIDWOOD 1960: pl. 56-59). However, it is not clear whether they represent D. or simply imitate this type. Countless standing bronze figurines of armed, male figures with conical headaddresses, which occur in the area of the Northern Levant from the Middle Bronze Age through the Iron Age (with a peak in terms of numbers at the Temple of Obelisks at Byblos [SEEDEN 1980]), probably took over a preexisting iconographic type.

3. MOBILE. It is known from texts that the mobility of D.’s statue was a peculiar feature of his cult. Since the Middle Bronze Age we have evidence that the statue traveled in processions on ships from one cult center to the other, e.g., from Tuttul to Emar (KREBERNIK 2001: 11; DURAND 1990: 52f, A.528; DOSSIN 1952: no. 79). Tribal leaders of the region also conducted processions to Tuttul with D.’s statue (KLUPPER 1954: no. 73). Moreover, the cultic statue was driven in local processions from the god’s temple to areas of →baetylls outside the city (for Emar cf. FLEMING 2000: 91).

The following depictions of D. may reflect the mobility of his cultic statue: A number of figurines with conical caps were placed on a movable support, such as an equid (30) or a wagon-like wheeled structure (32-34) found in the temple areas of Tuttul and Tall Chuera. Many others, e.g., from the Orontes region, seem to have been attached to a now-broken object (wagon/animal?: 35-38).

B. ANICONIC: POSSIBLE →Baetylls (sikkana) of D. are attested for Tuttul (KREBERNIK 2001: 11), Mari, Ekalte (DIETRICH/LORETZ/MAYER 1989: 133-137), and probably Emar (FLEMING 2000: 91). However, assigning a baetyl to a particular god is difficult in this region where baetylts of different gods are mentioned.

II.2. Associations


2. ASSOCIATED WITH ANIMALS 2.1. Lion (18, 20). 2.2. Goat-fish (18) 2.3. 2.3 Bird (14, 16-17). 3. ASSOCIATED WITH HUMANS: King and worshipper (13-15, 19, →Mountain god 25-26).

1. ASSOCIATED WITH DEITIES/DEMOS 1.1. Storm god. On 19th/18th cent. cylinder seals storm gods, sometimes in company with other gods of lower rank, are associated with enthroned D. On seal impressions 18* and 20 from Kültepe, it is →Adad standing on a →lion.dragon and holding a thunderbolt. A second storm god, standing on a →bull and holding the reins of the animal, appears on 18*. On Late Bronze Age cylinder seals from Emar the storm god stands opposite or in front of enthroned D., which illustrates his role as D.’s son (21*-23).

1.2. Shamash. On cylinder seal impression 18* from Kültepe, →Shamash standing on a →lion faces enthroned D. Whether the figure opposite D. on a Late Bronze seal from Emar (21*) is the sun god (→Solar deities) or the →king [ANE] is a matter of debate.

1.3. Mountain god. On several Classical Syrian cylinder seals small figures (→mountain gods?) either support the shrine of D. (12), or mountain gods are
standing by his throne (→Mountain god 25-26).

2. Associated with animals

When directly associated with D., several animals appear either alone (e.g., →monkey [12], →griffin [→Mountain god 26], →griffin-demon [15]), goat [16, 19-20]) or are part of a secondary scene, e.g., the →hare (13, 16).

2.1. Lion. As an attributive animal the →lion appears in a few narrative depictions as pedestal for D.’s throne (18*) or as his footstool (20). On the latter seal impression there is the head of a →caprid in front of the muzzle of the lion. According to a year name of Zimri-Lim (FELIU 2003: 129), the city gate of D. at Mari was ornamented with lion sculptures. Perhaps the “temple south” of the prominently situated double sanctuary at Emar, which had two gate lions and a cultic terrace with cavities (for baetyl?) (FINKBEINER 1999-2000), was the temple of D. as the city’s main god (the attribution to Asharat is tentative; plaque 11 was found nearby).

2.2. Goat-fish. On 18* the pedestal of D.’s throne is formed by a →lion together with a →goat-fish, which is an attribute borrowed from →Ea.

2.3. Bird. Although the →bird is often part of subsidiary scenes (16-17), it may also appear directly before or behind D., hovering over a standard (14).

3. Associated with humans: King and worshipper. On Syrian cylinder seals the →king [ANE] or a worshipper stand or are led in front of enthroned D. (13, 15, →Mountain god 25-26). In rare instances D. is approached by a couple (14), or receives libation and the offering of a goat (19).

III. Sources

III.1. Chronological range. The earliest representations of D. are the standing figurines (24-29, 32-38) from the late Early Bronze Age and early Middle Bronze Age (c. 2300-2000); they disappear in the early 2nd mill. Instead, depictions of the enthroned god (1-23, 30, →Mountain god 25-26) are popular during the 2nd mill. In the Iron Age D. still appears in Assyrian texts (e.g., DELLER 1985: 362ff) but no pictorial representations can be attributed to him. Though following the iconographic scheme of D.’s earlier representations, the statue from Carchemish is named differently (cf. § II.1.A.1). The same may hold true for enthroned figurines from Iron Age Palestine (KEEL/UEHLINGER 1998: 118).

III.2. Geographical distribution. The area where D. was depicted closely corresponds to the area of the “upper (western) land: Mari, Jarmutu, and Ebla as far as the Cedar Forest and the Silver Mountains,” attributed to D. in Sargonic inscriptions (cf. § I).

Most depictions stem from the Middle Euphrates region where D. was worshipped as the god of the region: standing terra-cotta figurines with conical caps are attested at Tell Bi’at Tutul (26*), Selenkahiya (24-25), Habuba Kabira (BADRE 1980), Munbaqa (CZICHON/WERNER 1998), Halawa (27-28), Emar (BADRE 1980), es-Sweyhat (29), etc. They also appear in Middle Syria (Orontes region and ’Amuq plain: Ebla, Afis, Hama [35-37], Tell en-Nebi Mend, Alalakh, Tell Judaidah, Çatal Höyük, Sendjirli, Qatna, etc. [BADRE 1980]). They are further attested in the Bālīth region (Hamnam et-Turkman, etc.; VAN LOON 1988: 580f, nos. 39-41) and at Tell Chuera (33-34; KLEIN/HEMPELMANN 1995: 238), but not east of Tell Chuera (in the Habur triangle) or downstream of Tutul (at Mari, Terqa, etc.).

Enthroned figurines appear in the area of the Middle Euphrates as far as Mari to the south (1*3*) and in the Jabbul region (7), and on cylinder seals in North Syria (12-13) as well as Anatolia (Kültepe) (18*-20). In Ugarit D. is attested in texts but not depicted, which may be due to the fact that →El assumes a parallel function in the Ugaritic pantheon. One should point out, however, that the designation of all enthroned figures in coastal Syria as “El” is based on convention only and not proven in every instance.

III.3. Object types. Few monumental objects representing D. are known to us (possibly the head of a statue, BOSSERT 1951: nos. 434-435). The cultic statues of D. mentioned in texts are reflected in minor arts, such as handmade and molded terra-cotta figurines and plaques (1*-11, 24-38) and bronze figurines, and possibly molded lead figurines as well (EMRE 1971: pls. 6-7). Narrative depictions are found on cylinder seals (12-23).

IV. Conclusion. D.’s position as main god of the Middle Euphrates region in Syria enables us to identify certain depictions in this area and west of it from Early Bronze Age through to Late Bronze Age. There is a remarkable change in the depiction of the god from that of an active, warlike god of the 3rd mill. to the passive, dignified father of the gods of the 2nd mill. At the end of the 3rd mill. he appears standing and with weapons, wearing a conical cap and long hair; during the 2nd mill. D. is depicted as an enthroned, bearded god and as the focus...
of attention and adoration. D. now yields his role and original iconography as the primary and active god of the region to his son →Haddu/Baal (→Storm gods), and assumes the position of head of the pantheon. As a result, the competency of D. and Haddu/Baal (fertility, regional domination) overlap to the extent that even their spouses may be the same (i.e., the goddess Shala/Shalash: ARCHI 1995; SCHWEMER 2001: 397-412).

The major change seems to have taken place at the beginning of the 2nd mill., i.e., considerably later than the similar process involving →Enil and →Ninurta in Mesopotamia. It probably parallels the introduction of a new generation of gods. According to the Phoenician History of Philo of Byblos, the theogony with →“Dagon” in three generations is: Uronos+Ge (gen. I); →El/Chronos, →Dagon (gen. II); Zeus Demaros/Baal-Hadad (gen. III) (BAUMGARTEN 1981). The historical reason for this could be the political rise of Yamhad as the most powerful Syrian city-state in the early 2nd mill., which was reflected in a growth of the religious power of Halab’s city god Haddu.

Throughout this period the warlike aspect of D. was maintained, illustrated by his weapons and his attributive animal, the →lion. Many of D.’s précédues refer to warlike events (D. being not the only, but the most important god for prophecies in this region; cf. DURAND 1988: nos. 196ff).

It is possible that D. was depicted at the Levantine coast, at least when he entered the local pantheon at Ugarit during the Late Bronze Age, since there is no proof that every enthroned male god of that region represents El. However, it is questionable whether some enthroned male figures from coastal (Southern) Palestine were designated as D. Still, it is likely that the depictions of D. in Syria created (or contributed to the creation of) a figurative type, representing the “head of the pantheon” (=Supreme god) as an enthroned, elderly god with or without the insignia of power in his hands. This type was adopted throughout the Levantine area and could have been addressed regionally with names of other main gods (e.g., El at Ugarit). Therefore the names of many enthroned male figurines of the Syro-Egyptian, Syro-Anatolian, and Syro-Phoenician group in Palestine (NEGĪ 1976: nos. 1437-1484) are uncertain. But it is possible that their attitudes and costumes were partly inspired by the seated figures of D.

### V. Catalogue


### VI. Selected Bibliography

Otto (in print)

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