

# Subartu XXXVI

Mille et une empreintes

Un Alsacien en Orient

# Subartu

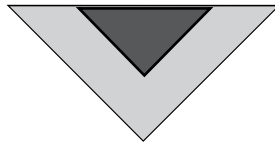
---

## Editorial Board

---

Marc Lebeau, M. Conceição Lopes, Lucio Milano,  
Adelheid Otto, Walther Sallaberger, Véronique Van der Stede

With the support of the following institutions:  
Università Ca' Foscari di Venezia, Université Libre de Bruxelles,  
Universidade de Coimbra, Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München,  
Johannes Gutenberg-Universität Mainz



Subartu — a peer-reviewed series —  
is edited by the European Centre for Upper Mesopotamian Studies

---



Manuscripts are to be submitted to:  
Marc Lebeau, ECUMS-Brussels, 41 Boulevard A. Reyers, Bte 6, B-1030 Brussels, Belgium

---

Order forms to be mailed to:  
Brepols Publishers, Begijnhof 67, B-2300 Turnhout, Belgium

© BREPOLS PUBLISHERS  
THIS DOCUMENT MAY BE PRINTED FOR PRIVATE USE ONLY.  
IT MAY NOT BE DISTRIBUTED WITHOUT PERMISSION OF THE PUBLISHER.

Julie Patrier, Philippe Quenet et Pascal Butterlin  
(éditeurs)

**Mille et une empreintes**

**Un Alsacien en Orient**

Mélanges en l'honneur du 65<sup>e</sup> anniversaire de Dominique Beyer



BREPOLS

Julie Patrier, Philippe Quenet & Pascal Butterlin  
Mille et une empreintes. Un Alsacien en Orient.  
Mélanges en l'honneur du 65<sup>e</sup> anniversaire de D. Beyer  
(=Subartu XXXVI), Brepols, Turnhout, 2016  
A4, sewn, xviii + 527 p.

Areas : Creta, Egypt, Greece, Iraq, Mesopotamia, Syria, Turkey.  
Contents : 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC, 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC, 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC, Akkadian Rituals,  
Archaeology, Bilecik, Bronze Age, Chagar Bazar, Beer, Délos, Ebla, Edfu, Glyptic, History, Hittite,  
Iconography, Jewellery, Khorsabad, Mari, Metal Work, Neo-Assyrian, Neolithic, Old Assyrian, Old  
Babylonian, Oxus, Philae, Porsuk, Seals, Slavery, Statuary, Sumer, Tell Afis, Tell 'Atij, Tell Iris, Tell  
Kaškašok, Temple, Terqa, Tyane, Ugarit.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a  
retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,  
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise,  
without the prior permission of the publisher.

ISBN 978-2-503-54926-2  
D/2016/0095/249

Printed in the EU on acid-free paper

## Sommaire

<i>Avant-propos des éditeurs</i>		ix
<i>Liste des publications de Dominique Beyer</i>		xi
Alfonso ARCHI	Ebla and Mari – years 2381/2380-2369 BC	1
Agnès BENOIT	Quelques réflexions sur la disparité de traitement entre les images masculines et les images féminines dans l'art de la civilisation de l'Oxus	17
Victor, Berthe, Sandra, Cyrille et Alexis BEYER	Dominique Beyer, côté jardin	33
Catherine BRENIQUET	Ur-Nanše, un inconnu illustre	41
Pascal BUTTERLIN	Stratigraphy and Discontinuity: Towards a Definition of Archaeological Time in Near Eastern Archaeology	57
Olivier CALLOT	Réflexions sur le « Palais Nord » d'Ougarit	69
Antoine CAVIGNEAUX	Le sceau d'Aman-Aštar et les portes de Sumer	79
Dominique CHARPIN	Un sceau gravé et inscrit sur commande d'après une lettre inédite des archives royales de Mari	87
Nicole CHEVALIER	Paul-Émile Botta et Eugène Flandin à Khorsabad : un consul et un peintre archéologues	99
Sophie CLUZAN et Camille LECOMPTE	Les sceaux d'Īšqi-Mari. Nouvelles perspectives sur l'idéologie royale et la chronologie de Mari	109
Michel FORTIN	Ancres de pierre ou pierres d'ancrage du III <sup>e</sup> millénaire trouvées à Tell 'Atij, dans la moyenne vallée du Khabour, en Syrie du Nord	125
Robert HAWLEY	Dan'ilu, paré du grand manteau syrien, dans la mythologie ougaritique	147
Anne HORRENBERGER	Une tranche de vie à Porsuk	159
Jean-Marie HUSSER	Retour sur le mariage sacré dans le culte de Melqart	161
Denis LACAMBRE et Julie PATRIER	L'ergastule- <i>nêpārum</i> de Chagar Bazar (Ašnakkum) au XVIII <sup>e</sup> s. av. J.-C.	167
Françoise LAROUCHE-TRAUNECKER	La construction des murs à Porsuk (Zeyve-Höyük), de l'Ancien Royaume hittite au Bas-Empire romain	183
René LEBRUN	Tyane avant la période gréco-romaine	199
Daniela LEFÈVRE-NOVARO	Osservazioni preliminari sui cosiddetti <i>kernoi</i> scoperti a Creta in contesti dell'età del Ferro	205

## Sommaire

Brigitte LION	« Ces femmes avec leurs sceaux... » Quelques mentions des sceaux et de leur usage dans les tablettes de Nuzi	215
Michel AL-MAQDISSI	Bilan provisoire de la séquence stratigraphique à Tell Iris	229
Jean-Claude MARGUERON	Des souvenirs, des fours et des tombes	241
Laetitia MARTZOLFF	« Des obélisques se dressent en avant de leurs môles... » Les obélisques des temples d'Edfou et de Philae	247
Maria Grazia MASETTI-ROUAULT et Olivier ROUAULT	Artisanat, iconographie et culture : une note sur Terqa au Bronze ancien	265
Paolo MATTHIAE	Quelques notes sur les déesses se dévoilant et les divinités ailées dans la glyptique paléosyrienne	279
Stefania MAZZONI	Storm-Gods at Tell Afis and a Syro-Hittite Seal	299
Cécile MICHEL	Les médaillons solaires dans la documentation paléo-assyrienne : des bijoux pour les dieux	319
Jean-Yves MONCHAMBERT	L'Euphrate du Néolithique au Bronze ancien : simple cours d'eau ou vecteur de communication ?	331
Juan-Luis MONTERO FENOLLÓS	Royauté, rites de fondation et métal dans la région syro-mésopotamienne : la ville de Mari au III <sup>e</sup> millénaire av. J.-C.	339
Clelia MORA	A Hittite Seal in the Ebnöther Collection, Schaffhausen (Switzerland)	349
Alice MOUTON	Jumeaux et naissances multiples en Anatolie hittite	357
Béatrice MULLER	Du Proche-Orient ancien à l'Occident médiéval : « concordances iconographiques »	367
Adelheid OTTO	Much more than just a Decorative Element: The Guilloche as Symbol of Fertility	379
Philippe QUENET	Le petit temple du Ninive V final à Tell Kaškašok III, niveau IV	395
Anne-Caroline RENDU-LOISEL	Une nuit, sur un toit, en Babylonie. Enquête sur le silence dans les rituels akkadiens	421
Carole ROCHE-HAWLEY	Remarques sur la paléographie des sceaux d'Anatolie et de Syrie au Bronze récent	435
Deniz SARI	The Pottery of the Late EB III Period from the Mound of Çiftlik Alanı, Bilecik	443
Gérard SIEBERT	Délos et l'Orient	453
Agnès SPYCKET	Les pérégrinations d'un objet archéologique	459
Marie STAHL	Archivage de la documentation de fouille : état des lieux et recommandations à l'usage des archéologues	461
Néhémie STRUPLER	« Dater d'après le cachet » : une approche méthodologique pour les cachets circulaires hittites	481
Önhan TUNCA	La statuaire protodynastique en Mésopotamie et le culte des ancêtres	491
Isabelle WEYGAND	Le thème des buveurs au chalumeau sur les reliefs estampés en terre cuite découverts à Terqa et à Mari	509



Dominique BEYER au pied du Massif rouge, Mari, 2009 (en haut),  
lors d'une visite à Alaca Höyük, 2010 (en bas).





## Avant-propos des éditeurs

Très cher Dominique,

Chacun de nous te connaît depuis maintenant de nombreuses années et c'est pour te témoigner notre infinie reconnaissance que nous avons souhaité t'offrir ces *Mélanges*. En effet, tu as toujours été d'un grand soutien, ce que soulignent tous les participants à ce volume, et nous voulions t'en remercier ici.

Pour ma part, je souhaiterais, dans les quelques lignes qui vont suivre, retracer une partie de notre parcours commun, qui a débuté il y a une quinzaine d'années maintenant.

En effet, jeune étudiante fraîchement arrivée à Strasbourg le bac en poche (en 2001), j'ai suivi ton enseignement dès la première année. Tu me fis alors découvrir toute la richesse de l'histoire et de l'archéologie du Proche-Orient ancien, que je ne connaissais pratiquement pas. J'ai par la suite choisi de me spécialiser dans cette voie et ai réalisé une maîtrise, un master puis une thèse sous ta direction. C'est donc grâce à toi que j'ai découvert l'Orient, c'est toi qui me l'a fait aimer et qui m'as transmis bon nombre des connaissances que j'ai maintenant. Je me souviens d'ailleurs de l'étonnement mais aussi de l'admiration que j'ai pu ressentir parfois en te voyant dégager un mur de briques avec une rapidité étonnante, muni de ton éternel pic qui ne te quitte jamais, lors de mon premier jour de fouilles à Mari alors que je ne distinguais rien de particulier dans ce qui me semblait n'être qu'un amas terreux. Mais, grâce à la confiance que tu m'as accordée, j'ai eu très tôt l'opportunité d'enseigner et de partir en fouilles à l'étranger, autant en Turquie qu'en Syrie, à Porsuk et Mari notamment.

Pour toutes les raisons évoquées ci-dessus et pour bien d'autres encore, c'est pour moi un très grand honneur que de te dédier ces *Mélanges* et l'occasion de te témoigner encore une fois mon affection.

Nombreux sont les collègues et amis à avoir répondu à l'appel que nous avons lancé avec Philippe et Pascal et à avoir voulu s'associer à notre initiative. Qu'ils en soient chaleureusement remerciés ici.

Je te souhaite une retraite heureuse et paisible et espère que, maintenant que tu es libéré des cours et surtout de toutes les contraintes administratives, tu pourras te consacrer comme tu l'entends aux recherches que tu as envie de mener ainsi qu'à ta famille et ceux qui te sont chers. – *Julie Patrier*

Participer à ces mélanges était rendre hommage aux trois facettes d'un même homme, l'enseignant, le scientifique et le collègue, qui m'ont été révélées au long des années et à la faveur des circonstances. C'est à la fin des années 1980 que je découvris Dominique professeur, dans la pénombre de l'amphithéâtre de l'école du Louvre où je suivais, jeune étudiant, les cours organiques de première année. J'étais loin à l'époque de pouvoir seulement me douter que je le recroiserai plusieurs fois dans les décennies qui suivraient. Je tiens de lui mon initiation à l'Archéologie orientale, une étape qui fut décisive.

Je ne fus capable que plus tard, en progressant dans mon cursus, durant mes longues années de doctorat et au-delà, d'apprécier sa dimension d'archéologue et de chercheur. Y contribuèrent, bien sûr, la lecture de ses publications, mais également les courtes entrevues qui s'égrainèrent au fil des colloques et de nos activités respectives en Syrie, notamment à ses retours de mission qui l'amenaient à l'IFAPO de Jirs al-'Abyad où j'ai tenu mes quartiers pendant quelques années. Le terrain ne nous ayant jamais rapprochés, ce fut donc longtemps une prise de connaissance en quelque sorte distante, mais toujours cordiale et stimulante.

C'est enfin en tant qu'authentique partenaire de travail qu'il me fut donné de côtoyer Dominique à partir de mon élection à la faculté des Sciences historiques de l'université de Strasbourg en 2008. Car si je trouvais un supérieur de fait hiérarchique, le Professeur en chaire, je profitai avant tout de son exemple, de sa guidance, de sa sollicitude et de son soutien, toutes choses qui se sont montrées déterminantes dans les nouvelles fonctions que j'avais à assumer. Je ne saurais lui être trop redevable de la confiance qu'il m'a accordée.

À tous ces titres, assembler un volume de mélanges en son honneur – tâche qui s'annonçait redoutable au vu des nombreux collègues, amis et proches qui se sont empressés de se joindre à l'entreprise – fut pardessus tout un plaisir. Les contributeurs, je l'espère, l'auront partagé. Qu'ils soient tous sincèrement et profondément remerciés. Puisse maintenant le dédicataire puiser dans ce volume la juste et collective marque d'estime et d'amitié que ses auteurs y ont mise. – *Philippe Quenet*

Tout est affaire d'empreinte dans l'itinéraire orientaliste de Dominique Beyer et c'est avec un plaisir tout particulier que le comité d'édition de ce volume de mélanges et tous ses participants se sont prêtés au rituel imposé par un tel exercice. Il est en effet à nos yeux le reflet des intenses relations que Dominique

### *Avant-propos des éditeurs*

Beyer a tissé tout au long de sa carrière, dans les musées, à l'université, mais surtout sur les divers terrains où il a travaillé au Proche-Orient – en Syrie, pour l'essentiel, mais aussi en Turquie, en Iraq et en Crète – et son travail est loin d'être achevé, rappelons-le. Dominique Beyer est surtout pour la génération de ceux qui l'ont suivi un modèle d'exigence face au terrain, mais surtout face à ces objets sortis des fouilles dont on sait à quel point ils sont difficiles à interpréter.

Son approche de l'archéologie orientale est avant tout concrète en effet, et tous ceux qui ont eu la chance de travailler avec lui ont apprécié la rigueur avec laquelle étaient conduites les fouilles et dirigés les chantiers, des chantiers dont on voyait tout de suite en les fréquentant qu'ils n'étaient pas seulement destinés à satisfaire un besoin de fouiller, mais, plus que tout, un besoin de lire et comprendre les vestiges archéologiques, quel que soit le degré de complexité créé par les complexes mécanismes de dépôt et d'érosion qui caractérisent les tells. Fouiller sous sa direction ou en collaboration avec lui, c'est en effet d'abord apprendre une discipline de travail faite de prudence et surtout d'humilité face à des vestiges qui ne se laissent jamais aisément saisir. Cette discipline passe avant tout par la connaissance intime des vestiges de briques crues, mais aussi des objets qu'ils recèlent. Elle passe surtout par de longues relations d'amitiés et un amour profond pour le Proche-Orient, ses chercheurs et ses habitants.

Plus qu'un archéologue fouilleur, Dominique Beyer nous a appris l'art d'exploiter les objets issus des fouilles, et travailler à ses côtés, à l'occasion notamment de la découverte des dizaines de scellements portant le sceau du roi Ishgi-Mari, découverts à Mari en 2000-2001, a été une véritable leçon pour beaucoup. Le travail de nettoyage, puis le patient travail de reconstruction des deux empreintes originales ont été conduits en quelques semaines extrêmement intenses et tous ceux qui ont vécu ces journées se rappellent à quel point on voyait la compréhension de l'histoire mariote se faire en direct, au fil de ses observations, loin des grandes théories.

« Mille et une empreintes » nous a donc paru un excellent fil conducteur pour ce volume de mélanges qui traduit la diversité des voies d'investigation que les travaux de Dominique Beyer ont affectée. On y retrouvera ainsi divers thèmes ou champs de recherche qui ont animé son chemin. Retenons d'abord l'iconographie, la glyptique syrienne et syro-hittite au premier chef. Mais le champ est plus large et comprend à la fois la statuaire et la coroplastie ; les terrains ensuite, qu'ils se situent en Turquie ou en Syrie ; des questions plus générales enfin, liées à l'évolution d'une discipline en pleine recomposition. C'est donc un très grand plaisir de lui présenter ce volume. – *Pascal Butterlin*

Lille – Strasbourg – Paris  
mars 2015



# Much more than just a Decorative Element: The Guilloche as Symbol of Fertility

Adelheid Otto\*

*Für Dominique mit herzlichem Dank für seine wegweisenden Beiträge  
zur Archäologie und Siegelkunst Syriens.*

When the impressions of king Išḫi-Addu's seal found in Qatna were published recently (fig. 1a), there was some amazement: why does the royal seal design consist only of a “decorative geometric design associated with an inscription”<sup>1</sup> and shows no figurative motifs as most other royal seals do? Usually the motifs depicted on royal seals mirror the self-concept of the king. Would Išḫi-Addu's seal be an exception to this rule? Since another seal of Išḫi-Addu<sup>2</sup> (fig. 1b) shows also mainly vertical rows of two different guilloche bands and inscription lines, the choice of the guilloche as the main motif of these royal seals seems to be intentional. What then was to be expressed by this pattern?

The guilloche is a motif which adorns Near Eastern stone vessels, stelae, votive plaques, temple facades, jewellery, seals and other media over the centuries. The guilloche, in French *torsade* and in German *Flechtband* consists of intertwined bands. These can be made up of several strands, may consist of elongated elements with an oval central space, or of perfectly circular elements with or without central dots (compare fig. 7b and 9a). Countless variants are produced by plaiting several bands together (see fig. 10b and 11b) or by connecting them diagonally<sup>3</sup>. Because the varying bands often merge into one another (fig. 2; see also fig. 10b), it may be supposed that they were interchangeable. From this it may be deduced that their intent was similar, if a meaning may be attributed to them at all: usually these bands are interpreted as ‘decorative elements’, although D. Beyer doubted the purely ornamental function of the motifs which form *bordures et bandes décoratives*: “*parmi ceux-ci certains ne sont que des motifs géométriques décoratifs, d'autres peuvent apparaître comme des éléments à valeur symbolique plus ou moins stylisés*”<sup>4</sup>. Probably he referred to the idea that the guilloche meant water. This has several times been articulated<sup>5</sup>, but not generally accepted. My aim is to show here that – although the decoding of abstract depictions is always a challenging task – the guilloche bands had a distinct symbolic value in the Ancient Near East.

## I. The development of the motif

Intertwined bands are already attested in the late fourth millennium BC on stamp and cylinder seals of the Late Chalcolithic/Late Uruk period (fig. 3a-c). They occur in a wide area from Arslantepe in the Northwest to Uruk and the Susiana in the Southeast. These bands were probably meant to depict the bodies of entwined snakes, the heads of which are frequently, though not always, represented (fig. 3b and 3c). H. Pittman interprets the snake twist as copulating snakes<sup>6</sup>, an attractive idea which is corroborated by observations in nature. Snakes tightly coil together while mating, forming a natural guilloche (see numerous pictures on the web).

Guilloche bands continued to be depicted in the third millennium, e.g. on stone vessels from Susa<sup>7</sup> (fig. 4). Several steatite vases from Mari, decorated with regular guilloche bands, some of them already

---

\* Professor, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität, Mainz.

<sup>1</sup> Morandi Bonacossi and Eidem 2006, p. 46; they assembled also the evidence for similar seals. At least one other contemporary cylinder seal which also shows only an inscription and a stylised guilloche pattern belonged to a high-ranking person, the wife of a general from Yamhad: Collon 1986, no 15 (see also a seal from the former Brett Collection: Collon 1986, no 14).

<sup>2</sup> See extensively Otto 2004, p. 82-83, pl. 87/2a-d, M 83.

<sup>3</sup> For numerous variants of *torsades/Flechtbänder* and *Schlaufenbänder*, see e.g. Beyer 2001, p. 415-417, and Otto 2000, p. 274-276.

<sup>4</sup> Beyer 2001, p. 413.

<sup>5</sup> P. Amiet (1966, p. 158) spoke of “*une torsade symbolique de l'eau*”; D. Collon (1975, p. 194) assumed “that the guilloche and spiral were used in Syria as a decorative element which served a dual purpose as a pictograph meaning ‘Flowing Water’”.

<sup>6</sup> Pittman 2007, p. 297.

<sup>7</sup> Amiet 1966, nos 118 and 122.

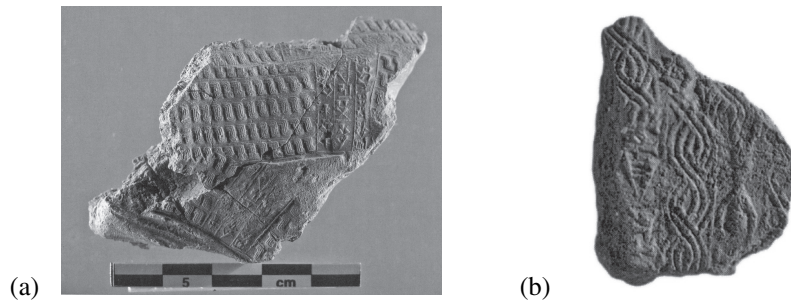


Fig. 1. (a) The seal of king Išhi-Addu of Qatna, showing only guilloche bands and an inscription (Morandi Bonacossi and Eidem 2006, p. 47, fig. 5b). (b) Fragmentary seal impression of another seal of king Išhi-Addu, found at Tuttul (Otto 2004, pl. 87/2b).



Fig. 2. Variants of the guilloche bands merged into one another on a Syrian seal of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Porada 1948, no 980).

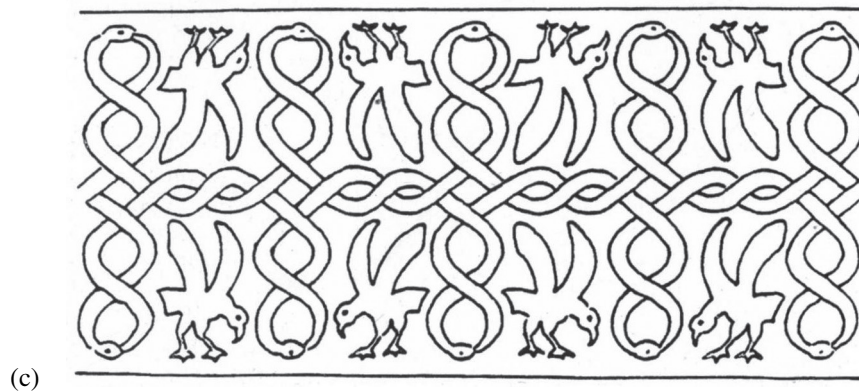
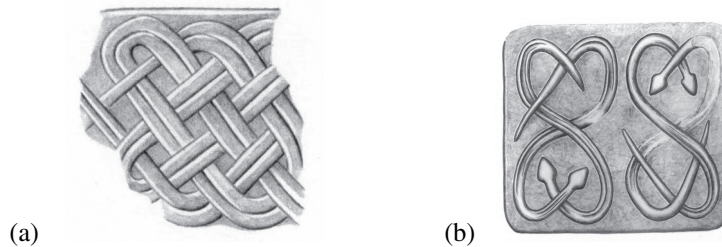


Fig. 3. Snake twists as guilloche bands on sealings from Arslantepe/Malatya and from Uruk, Building C, period Uruk IVa. (a) Pittman 2007, p. 239, A430-256. (b) Pittman 2007, p. 242, A434-250. (c) Boehmer 1999, fig. 68/1: Variante 1.



Fig. 4. Bowl of bituminous stone from Susa, depicting a guilloche below a row of birds (Amiet 1966, no 118).

consisting of various strands or with a dot in the middle<sup>8</sup>, seem to indicate that the motif was attested mainly in the North Mesopotamian and Syrian regions during the Early Bronze Age II-IV. But since countless steatite objects with numerous variations of coiled snakes have been found in the region around Jiroft, the special popularity of the motif in the Iranian orbit has been clearly established (fig. 5a). The motif was also common on contemporary cylinder seals, especially in the Khabur triangle. Numerous seals from Tell Brak and Tell Beydar show a horizontal guilloche between, above or below rows of animals or animals' heads and human figures, and exceptionally only parallel guilloche bands (fig. 6a-b).

The next securely dated depictions of guilloche bands are attested on North Mesopotamian and Syrian seals of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> century (Middle Chronology). They are dated to the reign of king Samsi-Addu<sup>9</sup> (fig. 7a) and to contemporary levels at Acemhöyük (fig. 7b)<sup>10</sup>. Presumably the motif had survived in the same region in the form of varying decorative bands<sup>11</sup>. The guilloche became more and more complex on Classical Syrian seals in Syria and North Mesopotamia: beginning from two lightly wound strands of elongated ovals (see fig. 7b), it developed to perfectly circular elements.

In the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the iconography of the Syrian glyptic became to be canonised, the guilloche replaced more and more other forms of 'decorative' bands. The bands were getting more complex and there was an increased use of mechanical tools. In the late Middle Bronze and the Late Bronze Age, the guilloche was more and more produced with the help of mechanical tools: circles and semi-circles were produced with the hollow drill and the connecting lines between them with the cutting wheel (fig. 8). This led to a certain optical dissolution, but the motif as such apparently kept its significance.

A guilloche occurs most frequently on Old Syrian and Middle Syrian seals. It is often placed horizontally between so-called secondary scenes which consist of animals, especially lions, birds, hares, gazelles and hybrid creatures such as sphinges or griffons; ritual scenes of people in a row or people involved in a banquet or symposium were also frequent (see fig. 11c, 12a, 13b and 13c). The vertical guilloche occurs on Old Syrian seals which show isolated elements arranged in vertical columns<sup>12</sup>. Two guilloche bands

<sup>8</sup> Margueron 2004, p. 288-289.

<sup>9</sup> Among these the famous seal of Samiya, servant of Samsi-Addu, and of another servant: Otto 2000, nos 415 and 418.

<sup>10</sup> Seal impression fragments from Tall Bi'a / Tuttul: Otto 2000, no. 363 and 375. This last seal impression of a servant of Samsi-Addu, found at Tuttul, shows the first horizontal guilloche dividing the secondary scenes (see extensively Otto 2004, p. 83-84, pl. 87-89, M 84). Approximately contemporary impressions were found in Mari (Beyer 1997, 467f., fig. 8 and 9) and *Kārum* Kanish Ib (Kültepe Kt. n/k 30; Otto 2000, no 399). A lapis lazuli seal is said to come from a homogenous hoard with objects of the XII<sup>th</sup> dynasty (Collon 1986, p. 60, no 18; Otto 2000, no 360). Iconography and style indicate that these seals originated in the Qatna region and Western Syria.

<sup>11</sup> A variety of bands is attested on seals of the early 18<sup>th</sup> century (Otto 2000, pl. 1-7, *Siegelgruppe* 1).

<sup>12</sup> A seal impression from Hammam Turkman (Meijer 1998, p. 219, fig. 1; Otto 2000, no 60) indicates that these seals were common in Northern Mesopotamia and Syria in the early Middle Bronze Age II.



Fig. 5. Snakes forming guilloche bands on a steatite object from Jiroft (Madjidzadeh 2003, p. 103).

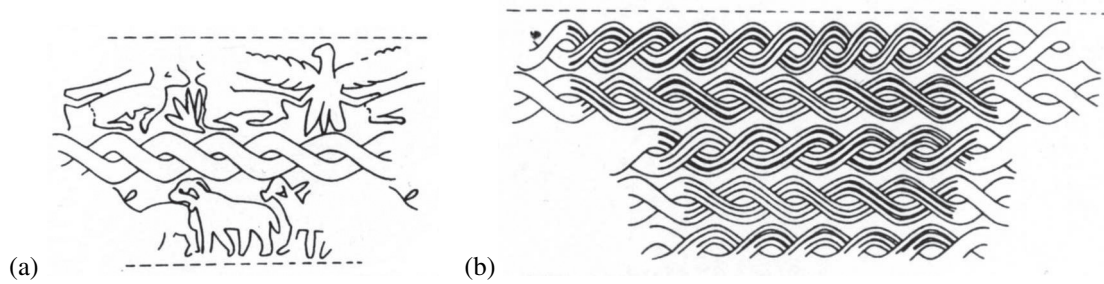


Fig. 6. Cylinder seal impressions from Tell Brak, SS Main and FS 5: (a) the guilloche associated with rows of birds and quadrupeds (Matthews 1997, no 234) and (b) the guilloche as the only motif (Matthews 1997, no 257).

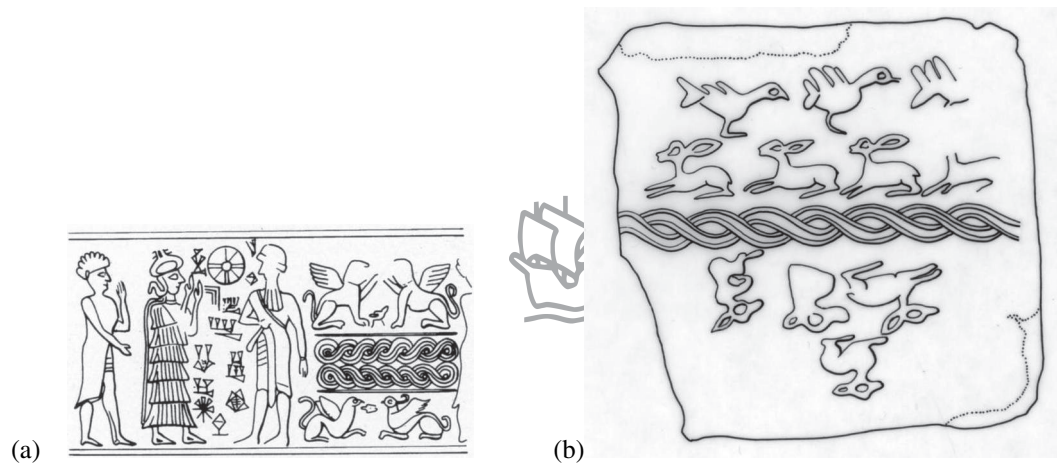


Fig. 7. The earliest attestations of the guilloche in the second millennium: (a) seal of a servant of Samsi-Addu, found at Tuttul (Otto 2000, no 375); (b) sealing from Achemhöyük (Otto 2000, no 29).



Fig. 8. The guilloche, produced with the hollow drill and the cutting wheel, on a Late Bronze Age seal from Ugarit (Schaeffer 1983, p. 95, no 8.022).

occur frequently along the upper and lower edge of Middle Bronze Age and Late Bronze Age cylinders (e.g. fig. 9a). Often they border the seals of high ranking people: among the sealings from Emar, which were published by D. Beyer, all the seals of the kings of Carchemish<sup>13</sup> were adorned prominently with guilloche bands (e.g. fig. 9b). Also many of the Old Hittite stamp seals were surrounded by varying guilloche bands (fig. 9c-d). Nevertheless, the mentioned guilloche bands are usually interpreted as pretty horizontal or vertical dividers of figurative scenes or as decorative framing bands and are judged as adornments of no relevance.

When the guilloche occurs isolated in the field, either vertically or horizontally, it is interpreted as a meaningless ‘filling motif’, even when it is inserted most prominently between the main figures of the image, such as on the seal of queen Šiptu of Mari (fig. 9e). Indeed, numerous scenes in which the guilloche was used in a very distinctive way, cast doubt on its interpretation as a purposeless decorative element. These scenes will be discussed in the following.

## II. The guilloche associated with the naked ‘Heroes of Water’ and the ‘Water God’

The good demon *lahmu*, depicted as a naked hero with curled hair and beard, was frequently depicted in connection with the ‘Water God’. A number of Old Syrian seals show a whirl of these ‘Water Heroes’, interconnected with their legs and holding flowing vases. The impression of a fine seal showing this scene was found on a tablet from *Kārum* Kanish Ib. It shows the seated ‘Water God’ with streams of water flowing from his shoulders and forming a circle around the ‘Water Heroes’ (fig. 10a). In this case the water is depicted as a double wavy line. On a slightly cruder (and on stylistic reasons a little later) seal in the Yale Babylonian Collection, the same whirl of ‘Water Heroes’ is surrounded by a guilloche which consists of perfectly circular elements (fig. 10b). A similar whirl of heroes is surrounded by a twisted band or narrow guilloche on a sealing from Alalakh VII (fig. 10c), thus further corroborating the similar meaning of the wavy bands and the guilloche.

These two possible ways of depicting water helps to interpret the motifs on a contemporary seal (fig. 11a): it shows an introductory scene to the ‘Water God’, similar to that from *Kārum* Kanish (fig. 10a). The water streaming from the shoulders of the god is depicted as wavy bands, but the guilloche bands on top and below the main scene and between the secondary scene clearly symbolize water. Other seals show the sitting ‘Water God’ framed above and below by guilloche bands, as if sitting in a watery shrine (fig. 11b), or enthroned above a guilloche (fig. 11c-d)<sup>14</sup>. But also the whirl of ‘Water Heroes’ associated with the guilloche is a frequent motif, even though the whirl is often reduced to a pair of heroes *tête-bêche*<sup>15</sup>.

The second seal of Mukannišum, servant of Zimrilim of Mari, shows two fish hybrids swimming on top of wavy streams of water and also guilloche bands enclosing the inscription (fig. 11e)<sup>16</sup>. This indicates that water was rendered as wavy lines in a narrative context, but was symbolized by a guilloche.

<sup>13</sup> Beyer 2001, p. 45-48.

<sup>14</sup> Similar is an impression from the Middle Bronze palace at Tilmen Höyük (Otto 2000, no 319).

<sup>15</sup> E.g. Otto 2000, nos 332-334.

<sup>16</sup> While impressions of Mukannišum’s first seal were found on tablets and their envelopes, this unique seal was used to guaranty the content of a leather sack (I am grateful to the *équipe de Mari* who allowed me to study the seal impressions in Paris twenty years ago).

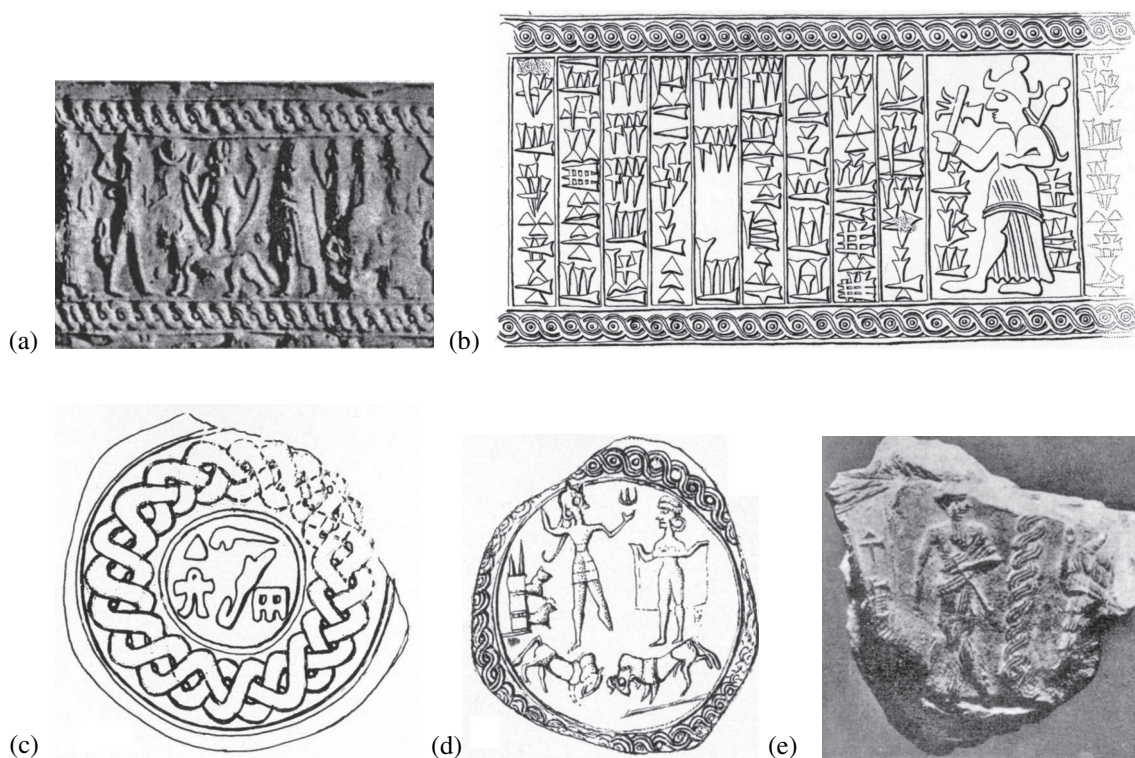


Fig. 9. (a) Guilloche bands bordering a Classical Syrian seal depicting the Naked Goddess opposite the Storm God (Gordon 1939, pl. V/38). (b) Seal of king Ini-Tešub of Carchemish, type a (Beyer 2001, p. 47/ A2a). (c) Old Hittite stamp seal, showing the owner's name surrounded by a guilloche (Boehmer und Güterbock 1987, no 120). (d) Old Hittite stamp seal, showing the Naked Goddess opposite the Storm God on the back of bulls (Boehmer and Güterbock 1987, no 147). (e) A guilloche between the main figures on the seal of Šiptu, queen of Mari (Parrot 1959, pl. XLVI/ME 69).

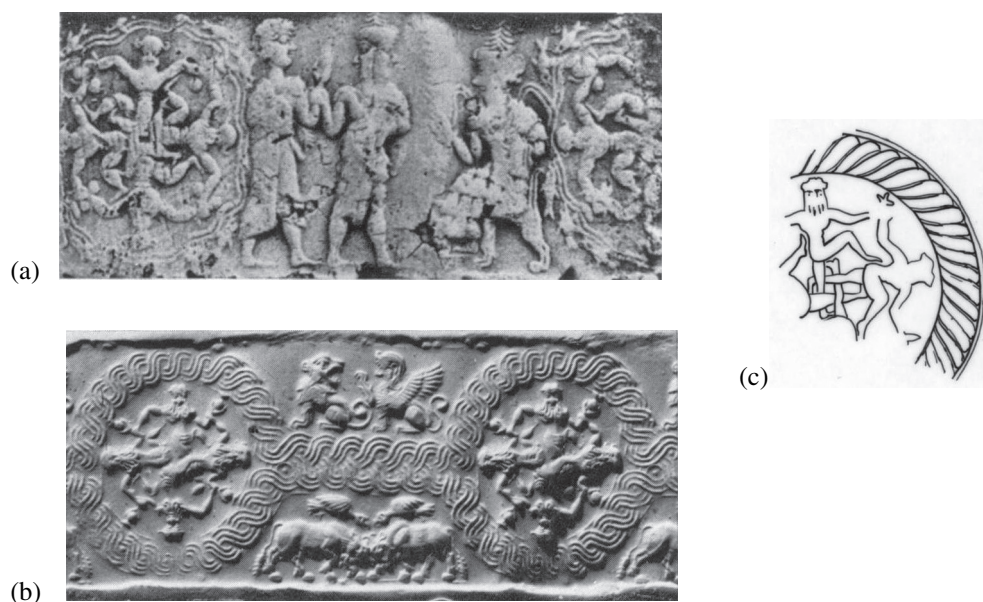


Fig. 10. (a) The 'Water God' associated with a whirl of 'Water Heroes' surrounded by wavy bands; sealing from Kārum Kanish Ib (Otto 2000, no 336). (b) A whirl of 'Water Heroes' surrounded by a guilloche (Buchanan 1981, no 1263). (c) A whirl of 'Water Heroes' surrounded by a guilloche; impression on a tablet from Alalakh VII (drawing after Collon 1975, p. 59, no 109).



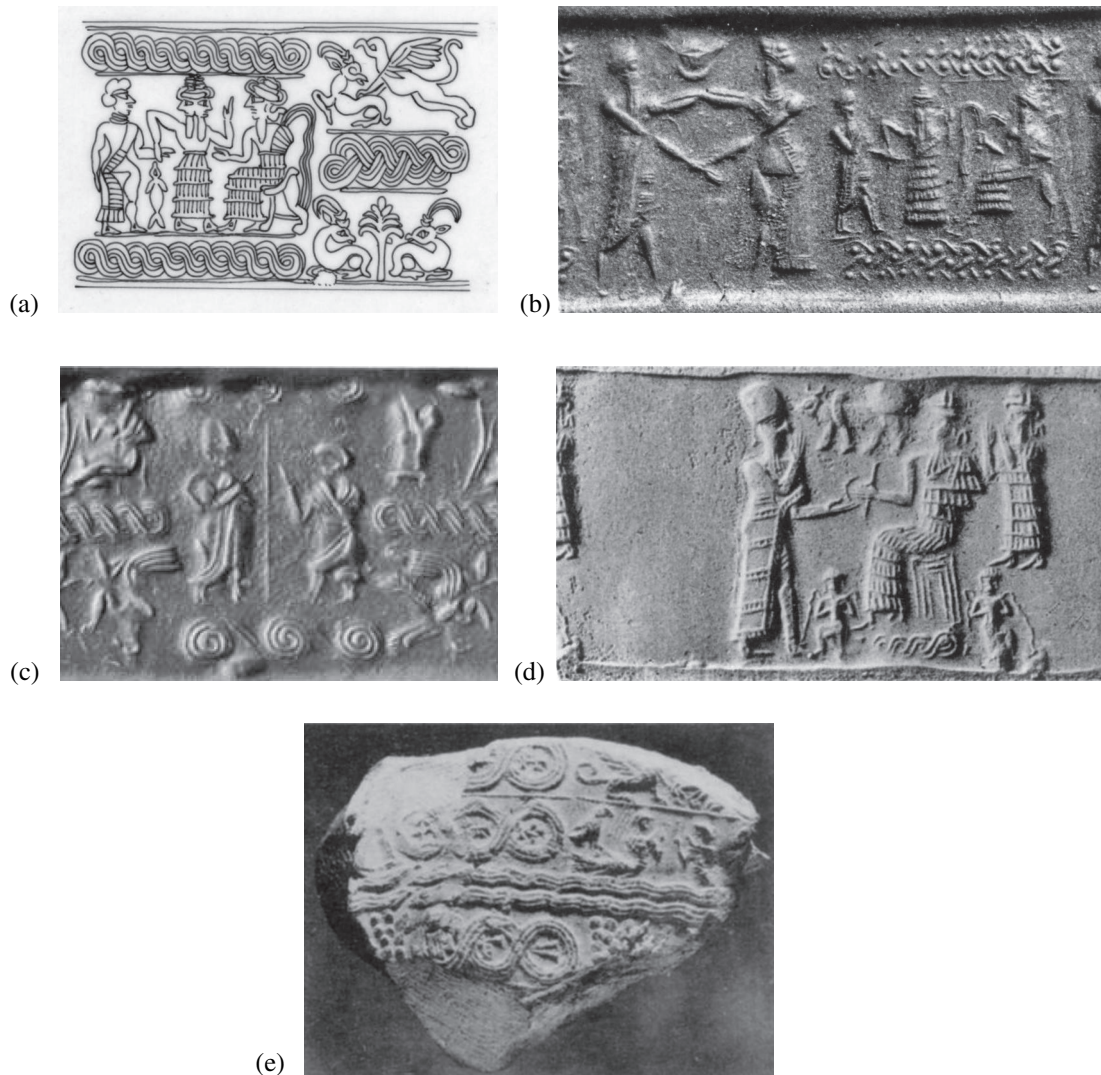


Fig. 11. (a) Guilloche bands extensively employed in scene with the ‘Water God’ (Otto 2000, no 335; drawing after Buchanan 1966, no 864). (b) Introductory scene to the ‘Water God’ framed by multiple guilloche bands (Delaporte 1923, A. 934). (c) The ‘Water God’ enthroned above a guilloche (Williams-Forte 1981, p. 257f., no 212). (d) The ‘Water God’ enthroned above a guilloche which is framed by ‘Water Heroes’ (Delaporte 1910, no 428 = Otto 2000, no 423). (e) Water depicted as wavy lines and guilloche bands on the second seal of Mukannišum, servant of Zimrilim (Parrot 1959, pl. XLVIII/ME 43).

### III. The guilloche associated with the goddess of rain and fertility

One of the most typical and most common deities represented on Syrian seals in the first half of the second millennium BC is a female person, who is characterized by an elaborate hair knot. She wears usually no horned crown and is often but not always depicted naked; nevertheless she is called the Naked Goddess<sup>17</sup>. In fact, she is depicted fully dressed on some seals, and on others she is lifting her skirt or veil. This shows that she wore in fact clothes, as was usual for gods, but that the act of lifting the veil was apparently one of her most important aspects and thus became a common form in which she was often rendered.

Clearly her nakedness was no indispensable trait at least during the early second millennium. Several seals of the Old Syrian Popular Style (19<sup>th</sup>/18<sup>th</sup> c.), among which a seal from Lidar Höyük, one from Tilmen Höyük and similar ones from the art market, show a fully dressed goddess below a toothed arch<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>17</sup> Uehlinger 1998-2001.

<sup>18</sup> Porter 2001, nos 140-142, 247-249. For the seal from Tilmen Höyük, see Umurtak 2007. The seal from Lidar Höyük was found in a level 9 (Middle Bronze Age) grave (Mellink 1990, p. 134-135, fig. 11).

This ‘Naked Goddess’ was depicted in a variety of ways<sup>19</sup>: lifting a skirt or veil (fig. 12a), standing on a bull (fig. 12b) and standing below an arch-shaped object (fig. 12c) or inside an arch-shaped, closed structure (fig. 12d). Various combinations of these three major attitudes occur, which shows that these are but different ways of depicting the same goddess. I know only one seal which shows all her three characteristic attitudes combined (fig. 12e).

In a few cases she is depicted winged, which points to her ability to fly and move quickly through the sky respectively (fig. 13a). On other seals the arch around her is winged: usually the wings are attached to the upper corners (fig. 12e and 13b)<sup>20</sup>, but on one seal from the Brett Collection four pairs of wings are attached to the arch (fig. 13c).

A seal in the Bibliothèque nationale<sup>21</sup> shows the same naked figure on a bull, but below a rectangular arch. Because the seal can be dated to the 19<sup>th</sup> century by means of antiquaria and style, the angular arch may be interpreted as an earlier form of the same arch. This is further corroborated by the goddess below the angular arch, which is held by winged genies, on the well-known seal of Samiya, servant of Samsi-Addu. This seal was cut with high probability in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The question arises, if the so-called winged gate, also called the winged temple or “*le temple ailé*” by Amiet, Matthiae<sup>22</sup> and others, is identical to this winged arch. However this may be, it is clear that the rounded arch with or without wings around the Naked Goddess denotes rain, as van Loon already observed many years ago. Van Loon<sup>23</sup> called her consequently “the Naked Rain Goddess”. Many seals show her closely associated with the Storm God (see e.g. fig. 9a, 9d, 12b and 13c), thus corroborating her association with rain-storm.

The arm postures of the female person below the arch vary. Either the goddess is putting her hands below her breasts or she grasps the arch; seldom she is shown lifting one hand. In rare instances the arch around her is closed at the bottom, thus indicating streams of water surrounding her completely (fig. 12d). In some cases she is wearing shoes with upturned tips (e.g. fig. 9a or 14a).

On a few seals the Naked Goddess is rendered in a way that is otherwise common for the ‘Water God’ Enki / Ea and thus underlines her related competences: the goddess with streams of water flowing from her shoulders and associated with the ‘Water Hero’ between two guilloche bands (fig. 14a), and the goddess standing below an arch, while Usimu, the two-faced vizier of Enki/Ea, introduces a worshipper to her (fig. 14b).

Several seals from Western Syria and the Levant show a person below an arch which is formed by Egyptian *ankh* symbols (fig. 14c) – clearly a free adaptation of the Egyptian purification ritual motif<sup>24</sup>. There is no doubt that the bow of *ankh* was meant to indicate life-giving water.

The different forms of arches (see fig. 12c-e and 13b-c) indicate that the guilloche was only one possible way of rendering the rain-storm. The positive aspect of this rain-storm and the Naked Goddess is expressed on many seals: the lifted veil is ending in blossoms (fig. 9a and 13a); birds are sitting above the lifted veil (fig. 12a-b); scorpions and hares, other symbols of fertility, are often associated (fig. 7b and 12a). Clearly this goddess was not only in charge of rain, but of fertility in a general way. The guilloche was used as symbol for water and fertility.

#### IV. The guilloche as streams of water on water basins and other works of major arts

There are also several works of major art which clearly demonstrate the symbolic meaning of the guilloche. A rectangular stone basin, found at Susa, is decorated with goat-fishes and “sacred trees” on its sides, thus indicating its function as a water basin, probably used in ablution rituals. The upper edge of the basin is decorated with a continuous guilloche band: a further argument for the enduring understanding of this motif as a symbol for water (fig. 15).

The middle-Elamite stela of Untaş-Napiriša, found at Susa, shows in one register two goddesses holding twisted bands of water. They terminate in vases which open to a guilloche band, forming the upper and lower border of the scene (fig. 16).



<sup>19</sup> There are hundreds of seals which show this goddess, often without any of the mentioned attitudes, but identical in antiquaria and associations. In the following only examples are given. For extensive discussions of the Naked Goddess, see: van Buren 1959; van Loon 1990, 1992; Uehlinger 1998-2001; Otto 1998; Otto 2000, p. 206-210; Otto 2007.

<sup>20</sup> See also Ward 1910, no 930, Keel-Leu and Teissier 2004, no 384, and others.

<sup>21</sup> Delaporte 1910, pl. XXXI, no 457.

<sup>22</sup> Amiet 1960; Matthiae 1989.

<sup>23</sup> Van Loon 1990.

<sup>24</sup> Teissier 1996, p. 104.

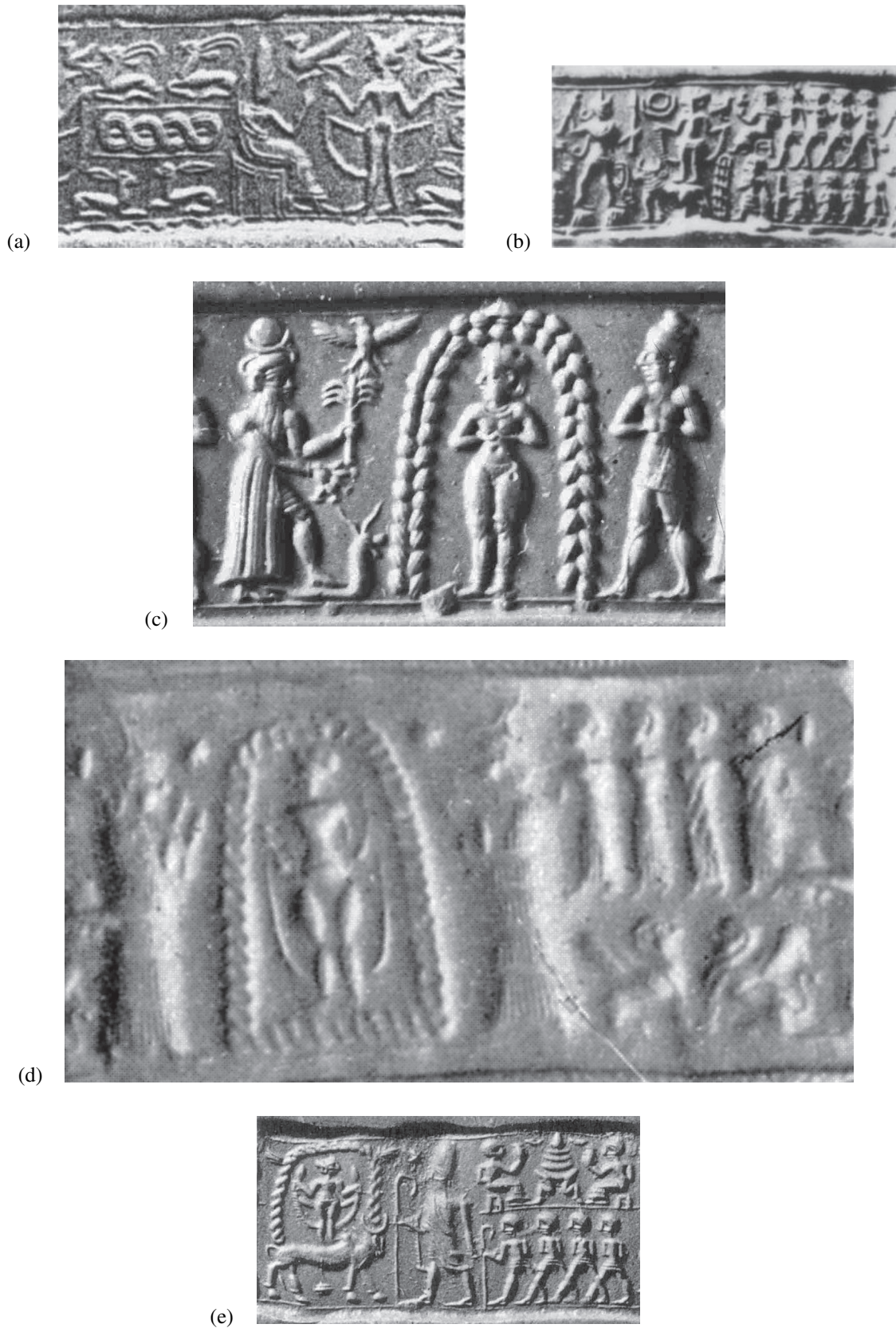


Fig. 12. The Naked Goddess in her various postures: (a) lifting a skirt or veil (Delaporte 1923, pl. 97/1); (b) standing on a bull and lifting her veil; remark the “rainy bow” behind her (Schmidt 1930-1933, no 115); (c) standing below an arch (Amiet 1984, fig. 39); (d) standing inside an arch-shaped, closed structure (von der Osten 1957, no 297); (e) standing on a bull, below a winged arch and lifting her veil (Porada 1948, no 944).

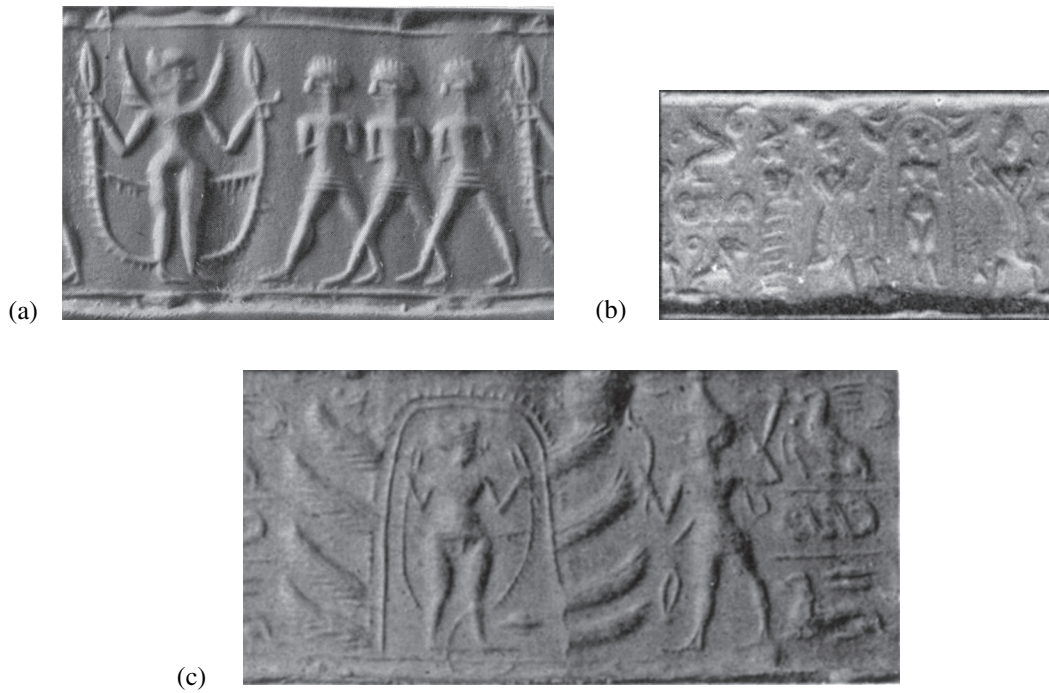


Fig. 13. The Naked Goddess winged or below a winged arch. (a) Buchanan 1981, no 1242. (b) Speleers 1943, p. 146, no 1453. (c) von der Osten 1936, no 90.

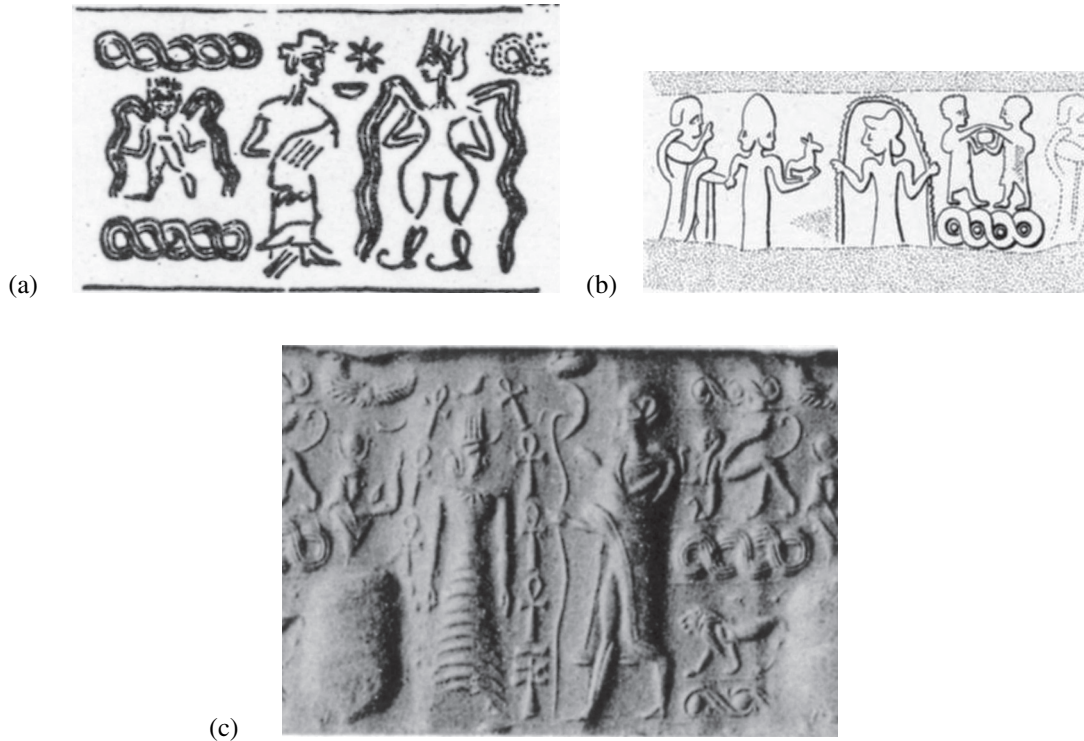


Fig. 14. (a) The Naked Goddess with water flowing from her shoulders, the Water Hero and guilloche bands (Ward 1910, p. 299, no 929). (b) Usimu, the two-faced vizier of Enki/Ea, introducing a worshipper to the Naked Goddess below an arch (Beyer 2001, p. 262, F17). (c) A goddess standing below an arch formed by ankh (von der Osten 1936, no 88).



Fig. 15. Water basin (13<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> c.), found at Susa (Amiet 1966, p. 394, no 298 A).



Fig. 16. Stela of Untaš-Napiriša, found at Susa, 14<sup>th</sup> c., detail (Orthmann 1975, fig. 290).



Fig. 17. Assurbanipal pouring a libation offering on slayed lions; relief from Nineveh, 7<sup>th</sup> c. (detail from Barnett and Lorenzini 1975, no 125).

Twisted columns were extensively used by Samsi-Addu for the decoration of the temples that he erected at Aššur, Šubat-Enlil (Tall Leilan) and Karana (Tall Rimah). It has been argued by U. Seidl that they symbolize water and fertility<sup>25</sup>.

The guilloche continues to be understood as a symbol of water in the first millennium BC. When Assurbanipal pours a libation on slayed lions, the water forms a guilloche band (fig. 17).

## Conclusions

The guilloche was just one of many, geometrically stylized bands which symbolized water. But it was the most common one, on the one hand presumably because of its appealing appearance. In fact, rivers and other streams of water which were flowing on the ground were most often depicted as wavy lines, not as a guilloche. The same is true for liquids which were poured during libation rituals, and for water flowing from the *aryballoi* which were held by gods and demons. But when there was no narrative context, the wavy strands of water were often replaced by the guilloche. Water in itself symbolized the well-being of the country, which depended – in a dramatic way and sensible for all Near Easterners – from regular and sufficient rainfall, perennial watercourses and elaborate irrigation systems.

But the guilloche depicted not only water in the strict sense, but symbolized also fecundity and reproductiveness of humans and animals. Therefore it is evident why the guilloche became an extremely popular motif on seals, which served also as amulets: it was a simple and appealing symbol of the crucial, but abstract notion of fertility.

Perhaps the symbolic value of the guilloche as fertility was even prior to its meaning as water, because the earliest representations of this motif in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> millennia evidently depicted mating snakes as a symbol of fertility.

<sup>25</sup> Seidl in press.

From this it may be concluded that the vertical guilloche on the seal of queen Šiptu of Mari, prominently displayed between the main figures (fig. 9e), was no meaningless ornament, but a highly explicit sign for Šiptu's mission to guarantee the continuity of the dynasty by her reproductiveness. Certainly it is not by chance, that only the women's apartment (or 'Harem') in the 'Grand Palais' at Mari was decorated with wall paintings in form of a guilloche band<sup>26</sup>. These guilloche bands were painted in intensive blue colour, thus directly referring to the origin of the motif, water as the source of life. When the cylinders of the kings of Carchemish are adorned prominently with guilloche bands, this is much more than a decoration. Therefore it is easily understandable why king Išhi-Addu of Qatna chose guilloche bands as the main motif of his seals (fig. 1a-b): they were at the same time the request for and the sign of the flourishing of his dynasty and his country.

It is to be hoped that the guilloche will be no longer misunderstood as a meaningless pattern, but will be accepted as what it was in the Near East over the centuries: a powerful symbol of fertility.

## Bibliography

Amiet, P.

1960 "Le temple ailé", *Revue d'Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale* 54, p. 1-10.

1966 *Elam*, Auvers-sur-Oise.

1984 "Antiquités syriennes du Musée du Louvre", *Studi Eblaiti* VII, p. 139-144.

Barnett, R.D., and Lorenzini, A.

1975 *Assyrische Skulpturen im British Museum*, Recklinghausen.

Beyer, D.

1997 "Deux nouveaux sceaux de style syrien provenant de Mari", *Mari. Annales de Recherches Interdisciplinaires* 8, p. 463-475.

2001 *Emar IV : Les sceaux. Mission archéologique de Meskéné-Emar. Recherches au pays d'Aštata*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis. Series Archaeologica 20, Fribourg – Göttingen.

Boehmer, R.M.

1999 *Uruk, Früheste Siegelabrollungen*, Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka 24, Mainz.

Buchanan, Br.

1966 *Catalogue of Ancient Near Eastern Seals in the Ashmolean Museum I. Cylinder Seals*, Oxford.

1981 *Early Near Eastern Seals in the Yale Babylonian Collection*, New Haven – London.

van Buren, E.D.

1959 "The Rain-Goddess as Represented in Early Mesopotamia", *Analecta Biblica* 12, p. 343-355.

Collon, D.

1975 *The Seal Impressions from Tell Atchana/Alalakh*, *Alter Orient Altes Testament* 27, Kevelaer.

1986 "The Green Jasper Cylinder Seal Workshop", in M.K. Kelly-Buccellati ed., *Insight through Images*, *Studies in Honor of Edith Porada*, *Bibliotheca Mesopotamica* 21, p. 57-70.

Delaporte, L.-J.

1910 *Catalogue des cylindres orientaux et des cachets assyro-babyloniens, perses et syro-cappadociens de la Bibliothèque Nationale*, Paris.

1923 *Musée du Louvre, Catalogue des cylindres, cachets et pierres gravées de style oriental II, Acquisitions*, Paris.

Gordon, C.H.

1939 "Western Asiatic Seals in the Walters Art Gallery", *Iraq* 6/1, p. 3-34.

---

<sup>26</sup> See Parrot 1958, p. 164-178, pl. XXXVIII, XL for the "Cour bleue" and the "chambre de la reine", both adorned with guilloche bands.

Keel-Leu, H., and Teissier, B.

2004 *Die vorderasiatischen Rollsiegel der Sammlungen „Bibel+Orient“ der Universität Freiburg Schweiz / The Ancient Near Eastern cylinder seals of the collections “Bible+Orient” of the University of Fribourg, Swiss*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis 200, Fribourg – Göttingen.

van Loon, M.N.

1990 “The Naked Rain Goddess”, in P. Matthiae, M. van Loon and H. Weiss eds, *Resurrecting the Past. A Joint Tribute to Adnan Bounni*, Uitgaven van het Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul 67, Istanbul, p. 363-378.

1992 “The Rainbow in Ancient West Asian Iconography”, in D.J.W. Meijer ed., *Natural Phenomena. Their Meaning, Depiction and Description in the Ancient Near East*, Amsterdam, p. 149-168.

Madjidzadeh, Y.

2003 *Jiroft. The Earliest Oriental Civilization*, Teheran.

Margueron, J.-Cl.

2004 *Mari. Métropole de l’Euphrate au III<sup>e</sup> et au début du II<sup>e</sup> millénaire av. J.-C.*, Paris.

Matthews, D.M.

1997 *The Early Glyptic of Tell Brak. Cylinder Seals of Third Millennium Syria*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis. Series Archaeologica 15, Fribourg – Göttingen.

Matthiae, P.

1989 “Le temple ailé et le taureau : origine et continuité de l’iconographie de la grande déesse à Ebla”, in M. Lebeau et Ph. Talon éd., *Reflets des deux fleuves. Volume de mélanges offerts à André Finet*, Akkadica Supplementum VI, Leuven, p. 127-135.

Meijer, D.J.W.

1998 “Rich Man Poor Man. Two Sealings on a Tag from Hammam al Turkman”, in M. Lebau ed., *About Subartu. Studies Devoted to Upper Mesopotamia / À propos de Subartu. Études consacrées à la Haute Mésopotamie. Vol. 2 : culture, société, image*, Subartu IV/2, Turnhout, p. 217-221.

Mellink, M.

1990 “Archaeology in Anatolia”, *American Journal of Archaeology* 94/1, p. 125-151.

Morandi Bonacossi, D., and Eidem, J.

2006 “A Royal Seal of Ishhi-Addu, King of Qatna”, *Akkadica* 127/1, p. 41-57.

von der Osten, H.H.

1936 *Ancient Oriental Seals in the Collection of Mrs. Agnes Baldwin Brett*, Oriental Institute Publications 37, Chicago.

1957 *Altorientalische Siegelsteine der Sammlung Hans Silvius von Aulock*, Studia Ethnographica Upsaliensia 13, Uppsala.

Orthmann, W. ed.

1975 *Der Alte Orient, Propyläen-Kunst Geschichte* 14, Berlin.

Otto, A.

1998 “A Middle Bronze Age Cylinder Seal from the Jar Burial F167 at Tell Ahmar”, *Abr-Nahrain* 35, p. 120-134.

2000 *Die Entstehung und Entwicklung der Klassisch-Syrischen Glyptik*, Untersuchungen zur Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie 8, Berlin – New York.

2004 *Tall Bi’a/Tutul-IV: Siegel und Siegelabrollungen*, Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichung der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft 104, Saarbrücken.

2007 “Regen. B. In der Bildkunst”, *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* 11, p. 291-293.



- Parrot, A.
- 1958 *Mission archéologique de Mari II. Le palais 1 : architecture*, Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique 68, Paris.
- 1959 *Mission archéologique de Mari II. Le palais 3 : documents et monuments*, Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique 70, Paris.
- Pittman, H.
- 2007 “Chapter III: The fourth Millennium Glyptic at Arslantepe”, in M. Frangipane ed., *Arslantepe Cretulae. An Early Centralised Administrative System before Writing*, Roma, p. 175-354.
- Porada, E.
- 1948 *Corpus of Near Eastern Seals in North American Collections I, The Collection of the Pierpont Morgan Library*, Washington.
- Porter, B.A.
- 2001 *Old Syrian Popular Style Cylinder Seals*, Diss. Columbia University.
- Schaeffer-Forrer, Cl.F.A.
- 1983 *Corpus des cylindres-sceaux de Ras Shamra-Ugarit et d’Enkomi Alasia*, Recherche sur les civilisations 13, Paris.
- Schmidt, A.
- 1930-1933 *Rollsiegel im Museum der schönen Künste in Moskau (Ehemalige Sammlung Golenischeff)*, Kopenhagen.
- Seidl, U.
- in press “Bildschmuck an mesopotamischen Tempeln des II. Jahrtausends v. Chr.”, 7. *Internationales Colloquium der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft, 11. bis 13. Oktober 2009 Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München*.
- Speleers, L.
- 1943 *Catalogue des intailles et empreintes orientales des Musées royaux d’art et d’histoire (supplément)*, Bruxelles.
- Teissier, B.
- 1996 *Egyptian Iconography on Syro-Palestinian Cylinder Seals of the Middle Bronze Age*, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis. Series Archaeologica 11, Fribourg – Göttingen.
- Uehlinger, Ch.
- 1998-2001 “Nackte Göttin. B. In der Bildkunst”, *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* 9, p. 53-64.
- Umurtak, G.
- 2007 “Tilmen Höyük’te bulunmuş olan bir silindir mühür üzerine Gözlemler – değerlendirmeler”, in G. Umurtak, Ş. Dönmez and A. Yurtsever eds, *Refik Duru’ya Armağan / Studies in Honour of Refik Duru*, İstanbul, p. 175-186.
- Ward, W.H.
- 1910 *The Seal Cylinders of Western Asia*, Carnegie Institution of Washington. Publication no 100, Washington, D.C.
- Williams-Forte, E.
- 1981 “Rollsiegel aus der Periode Altsyrisch II”, in Th. Beran ed., *Archäologie zur Bibel (Länder der Bibel: archäologische Funde aus dem vorderen Orient.... Leihgaben der Lands of the Bible Archaeology Foundation. 20. Januar-18. April 1982, München)*, Mainz, p. 256-262.

