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Temple/Herd: Mesopotamian Visions of Animal Community in the Early Third Millennium BCE

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Abstract

This paper reconsiders a group of Mesopotamian cylinder seals depicting ungulate animals beside a paneled facade or doorway, conventionally known as the "temple and herd" seals. Although previous scholarship has frequently emphasized these seal images' links to the animal byre scenes of Late Uruk glyptic, and has accordingly highlighted the continuity in portrayals of domestic animal abundance that render the temple as a virtual or literal "cattlepen," a closer examination of the temple/herd genre reveals sharp discontinuities and divergences from their Uruk precedents, both in the species and ages of animals depicted and in the relations between the animals and the human-built structure. These divergences undercut the common blanket characterization of early Mesopotamian animal imagery as a celebration of values of domesticity and enclosure. The Early Dynastic evidence for temples' ritual and symbolic engagements with the types of animals most frequently depicted in the temple/herd seals (especially gazelles and deer) points to the roles of these animals in expanding temples' imagined communities outside of the real sphere of human control, rather than to the expansion of such control through practices and imagery of domestication.

Keywords: *glyptic, Mesopotamian art history, Early Dynastic period, human-animal studies.*

Introduction: Two Gazelle Stories

> We were sad when she finally did disappear for good in the spring. We felt that we were probably responsible for her untimely end—for such it must have been. She was so tame now that she would

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> have been an easy mark for any hunter. We didn't suspect any of the people from the villages near us, for it is doubtful that they would have made an end of her while we were around. But we had occasionally seen gazelles off in the distance and we figured that our gazelle had probably seen them and followed them for a time—on into strange territory where the red collar would have meant nothing more than private ownership.[2]

Figure 1. "Gazelle munching on ancient bone." After Braidwood, *Digging beyond the Tigris*, fig. 42. Reproduced courtesy of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures of the University of Chicago.

The story of Gazelly, the gazelle who lived for a time at the dig house of the University of Chicago's 1950-1951 excavations at Jarmo in Iraqi Kurdistan, is a brief vignette in Linda Braidwood's memoir of dig life. Gazelly first appears as a "handsome young gazelle tethered to a stake, nibbling away at the grass" in the house of the regional mayor, who gifts her to the Braidwood children. She is gradually tamed until she can be left untethered to roam between the house and the mound. Despite her habits of nibbling on the workers' lunches and even on some of the ancient

[2] Linda Braidwood, *Digging beyond the Tigris: A Woman Archaeologist's Story of Life on a 'Dig' in the Kurdish Hills of Iraq* (Abelard-Schuman, 1953), 186. Gazelly is also mentioned in a published letter from Robert Braidwood, who notes there that she "has tamed down beautifully," but expresses concern that "the blighted beast is going to eat my garden"; see Robert J. Braidwood, "Letters from the Field, 1950-1951: Excavations at Jarmo," *The Oriental Institute: News & Notes* 156 (Winter 1998): 1.

faunal remains (Figure 1), she becomes friendly with the excavation team and workmen at the site.[3]

Although Gazelly canters through only a few pages of Braidwood's account, during her life at the dig house she tests, affirms, and mediates many of the social relationships described in the book: first as a gift embodying the friendly relationship between excavators and a local political authority, then as a member of the dig house family and the children's playmate, and finally (in the quote above) as a test of the mutual trust between the excavation team and their neighbors.[4] In the modern archaeological memoir, the living animal is a strong-willed and highly social being who elicits strong affects, plays with her captors' attention by repeating forbidden behaviors, and finally exits the narrative to live, however briefly, among her fellow gazelles. Throughout her time as a dig house pet, Gazelly roams back and forth across the borders of wildness, tameness, and ferality. Her movement across those borders provokes anxieties and adoration, as her spirited refusal to be confined and her too-trusting relationship with humans mark her as perpetually out of place in the house and in the wild herd.

[3] Braidwood, *Digging beyond the Tigris*, 185 and fig. 42.

[4] In Braidwood's narrative, Gazelly is presented as a temptation (not unlike that of looting artifacts) and as a nuisance to local workers and residents, and her continued safety indexes the efficacy of the archaeologists' strategies for ensuring their workers' and neighbors' compliance, whether by cultivating interpersonal friendship and "good-will" (Braidwood, *Digging beyond the Tigris*, x-xi) or by systems of reward and threat of discipline (e.g., Braidwood, *Digging beyond the Tigris*, 71). On such tropes and anxieties over trust in archaeological writing, cf. Allison Mickel and Nylah Byrd, "Cultivating Trust, Producing Knowledge: The Management of Archaeological Labour and the Making of a Discipline," *History of the Human Sciences* 35, no. 2 (2021): 3-28.

Figure 2. Composite drawing after seal impressions from Ur (Tell al-Muqayyar), Iraq. Drawing by the author, after Legrain, *Archaic Seal-Impressions*, pls. 20 and 51, no. 387.

A pictorial variant on a similar narrative theme appears on cylinder seal impressions from Ur (modern Tell al-Muqayyar) in the far south of Iraq, antedating Gazelly's tale by a few centuries short of five millennia (ca. 2750 BCE).[5] In the reconstructed seal design (Figure 2), two lines of figures in informal registers move in opposite directions, the legs of the upper group interspersed with the heads of the lower, so that they look almost like two turning gears. The upper frieze depicts a herd of gazelles in frantic motion, evidently fleeing from the large bird of prey whose talons have captured a straggler at the rear. Below is a more sedate procession of one naked and two clothed human figures, probably a man and two women, carrying vessels toward another standing, skirted anthropomorphic figure under a canopy before a paneled facade. The looped-ring doorposts help to identify this structure as a temple, and the skirted figure, like the similarly positioned personage on the upper register of the Uruk Vase, may be either the deity or a human

[5] These seal impressions were first published by Léon Legrain in *Ur Excavations III: Archaic Seal-Impressions* (Trustees of the British Museum and the University Museum, 1936), 35-36, pls. 20 and 51, no. 387. On the absolute dates of the Seal Impression Strata 5-4 at Ur, in which the relevant seal impressions were found, see Camille Lecompte and Giacomo Benati, "Nonadministrative Documents from Archaic Ur and from Early Dynastic Mesopotamia: A New Textual and Archaeological Analysis," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 69 (2017): 3-7.

representative.[6] At the fore of the procession in the lower frieze is another gazelle, standing between the naked libation-pourer and the vegetal stalk that the libation waters.

Above, the bird of prey on the lintel of the temple, probably a reference to an actual sculpture above a temple doorway like that which has survived from a slightly later period at Tell al-'Ubaid (ancient Nutur), fragments the animal herd and isolates one of its members. Below, a similarly isolated animal—perhaps even the same individual, in a very early example of continuous visual narration—has been incorporated into the community of worshipers at the temple. The stacked registers present the violence of separation and the nourishment and nurture of the captive as inextricably linked, perhaps separated in sequence but simultaneous within the space of the seal image. The double action of capture and nurture introduces a certain duality into the relationship between the upper and lower rows of figures in this image: the two are quite literally parallel with one another and might be read as mirror images of collectivities, but the capture of a member of one collective and incorporation into the other creates one point of real intersection.

These two tales (one textual and modern, the other visual and ancient) of gazelles crossing between animal and human communities provide a useful preface to the interpretation of a set of images with similar animal figures and temple facades, which, in contrast with the Ur seal image, leave any narrative explanation of the connection between animal herd and the human household or institution unresolved and implicit. These

[6] Legrain (*Archaic Seal-Impressions*, 35-36) describes the figure as "king or god." See also Eva Braun-Holzinger, *Frühe Götterdarstellungen in Mesopotamien* (Academic Press Fribourg/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 55-57, Siegel 19; Braun-Holzinger includes the seal in her catalogue of early divine images but describes it as "problematisch." The figure has also been characterized as a "priest-king," or paramount human cultic and political leader, recalling precedents in artworks of the Late Uruk period: see Pierre Amiet *La Glyptique mésopotamienne archaïque*, second edition (Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, 1980), 117, no. 823; idem, "La naissance des dieux: approche iconographique," *Revue Biblique* 102, no. 4 (1995): 492-493.

are the "temple and herd" seals that proliferated in central and southern Mesopotamia around the beginning of the third millennium BCE, best known from the excavations at Khafāja (ancient Tutub) and Tell Agrab in the Diyala region. I have adopted the somewhat idiosyncratic writing of "temple/herd" for the name of this genre of seals to call attention to the ambivalence inherent in the phrases "temple herd" or "temple and herd," as in the seal images themselves. These images raise the question of how we ought to understand the relationship between the two entities. The temple and the herd evidently *belong* together, but does the herd belong to the temple, as most previous scholarship has assumed?[7] And in what sense should we take this "belonging"?

The intertwining of the affective, metaphoric, and material bonds between human and nonhuman social formations in the narratives outlined above should make us wary of overly reductive interpretations of the temple/herd seals. They should, in particular, guard against the simplicity of metanarratives (or "ontostories") of domestication,[8] which have long reduced depictions of herbivores in early Mesopotamian artworks to embodiments of a generic, objectified abundance or to models of political docility. If, as proponents of current "social zooarchaeology" have argued,[9] nonhuman animals in antiquity affected and participated in (more-than-)human social life in ways that far exceed the limits of an economistic subsistence or surplus-production model, then our understanding of animals' significance in visual art cannot take as its basis

[7] See review under "Interpreting the Temple/Herd," below.

[8] Cf. Hannah Chazin, *Live Stock and Dead Things: The Archaeology of Zoopolitics between Domestication and Modernity* (The University of Chicago Press, 2024), especially 17-54. See also Marianne Elisabeth Lien, Heather Anne Swanson, and Gro B. Ween, "Introduction: Naming the Beast—Exploring the Otherwise," in *Domestication Gone Wile: Politics and Practices of Multispecies Relations*, ed. Heather Anne Swanson et al. (Duke University Press, 2018), 1-30. (My thanks to the anonymous reviewer of this article for recommending the latter citation.)

[9] E.g., Nerissa Russell, *Social Zooarchaeology: Humans and Animals in Prehistory* (Cambridge University Press, 2012); Nick J. Overton and Yannis Hamilakis, "A Manifesto for a Social Zooarchaeology: Swans and Other Beings in the Mesolithic," *Archaeological Dialogues* 20, no. 2 (2013): 111-136; Chazin, *Live Stock and Dead Things*, 7-9.

the assumption that animals became significant solely or even primarily as a result of their extractable economic value.

In what follows, I argue that the forms of political subjectivity and social belonging are more varied—and that nonhuman animals' modeling of and implications in these forms of collectivity are more complicated—than prior scholarship on early Mesopotamian artworks has normally allowed. As I will demonstrate, the seals of the temple/herd genre pointedly reject the models of domesticity emphasized in the Late Uruk byre scenes. Instead of projecting notions of enclosure, control, and economic exploitation onto these visions of wild animals, we may better understand them as adjuncts to other practices of partitive incorporation that made temples consubstantial with their human and nonhuman constituents *without* the need for real enclosure or control. The unhampered mobility of the figured animals may, in fact, have been essential to their meaning, as it allowed the temple to make aspirational and strategically ambiguous claims to extend itself into "strange territories" beyond any human control or oversight.[10]

From Byre to Temple/Herd

The ungulate-animal-and-facade pairing appears in Mesopotamian glyptic art as early as the Late Chalcolithic 2 (ca. 3800 BCE) in sealings from Tepe Gawra, levels IX-X.[11] The more immediate precedents for the early

[10] On "strategic ambiguation" by early Mesopotamian governing institutions, see further discussion below. The term is adopted here from Seth Richardson, "Early Mesopotamia: The Presumptive State," *Past and Present* 215 (2012): 3-49; idem, "Before Things Worked: A 'Low-Power' Model of Early Mesopotamia," in *Ancient States and Infrastructural Power: Europe, Asia, and America*, ed. Clifford Ando and Seth Richardson (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 17-62; Kathryn Grossman and Tate Paulette, "Wealth-on-the-Hoof and the Low-Power State: Caprines as Capital in Early Mesopotamia," *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 60 (2020): 1-20.

[11] Mitchell S. Rothman, *Tepe Gawra: The Evolution of a Small, Prehistoric Center in Northern Iraq* (University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2002), pl. 51, no. 2033, and pl. 55, no. 2291; idem, "Religion,

third-millennium temple/herd seals, however—and those with which they are most often compared or even elided—are the animal byre images in various media from the Late Uruk/Uruk IV period (ca. 3300-3100 BCE). Unlike the temple/herd seals from the Diyala, the Uruk byre scenes normally feature round-topped structures, sometimes with loose reeds protruding from their summits.[12] Poles or reed bundles in the forms of divine emblems, recognizable from their use as logographic writings of divine and city names in the protocuneiform script,[13] frequently adorn these structures. The animals who surround or emerge from these structures are normally either bovines or sheep, the latter sometimes (as on the British Museum's Uruk trough) displaying the spiral horns characteristic of a certain domestic breed popular in Uruk artworks.[14]

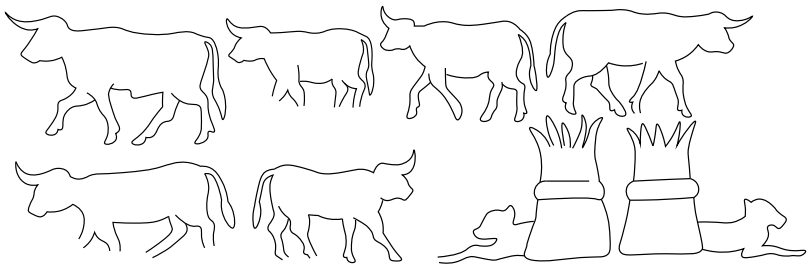

Figure 3. Drawing after seal impression from Uruk (Warkā'), Iraq. Redrawn by the author, after Amiet, *Glyptique mésopotamienne*, no. 23.

Function, and Social Networks: Tepe Gawra in the Late Fifth and Early Fourth Millennia BCE," in *À propos de Tepe Gawra: le monde proto-urbain de Mésopotamie*, ed. Pascal Butterlin (Brepols, 2009), 21 and 34, fig. 3k.

[12] On the nature of the structures depicted, see Ernst Heinrich, *Bauwerke in der altsumerischen Bildkunst* (O. Harrassowitz, 1957), 11-38.

[13] Krystyna Szarzyńska, "Archaic Sumerian Standards," *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 48 (1996): 1-15; Renate Marian Van Dijk-Coombes, "The Architectural Origin of Mesopotamian Standards in Late Uruk/Jemdet Nasr Period Iconography," *Antiguo Oriente* 16 (2018): 117-146.

[14] Emmanuelle Vila and Daniel Helmer, "The Expansion of Sheep Herding and the Development of Wool Production in the Ancient Near East: An Archaeozoological and Iconographical Approach," in *Wool Economy in the Ancient Near East and Aegean: From the Beginnings of Sheep Husbandry to Institutional Textile Industry*, ed. Catherine Breniquet and Cécile Michel (Oxbow, 2014), 22-40.

Two nearly identical seals with such imagery were used at the "Anu-Ziqqurat" at Uruk (Warkā') during the Uruk IVa phase (Figure 3),[15] both depicting files of cattle in two registers, with the lower registers including hornless calves emerging from byres. Another seal design, attested in impressions assigned to the same phase of the site's occupation, this time in Building C of the Eana precinct,[16] portrays young animals of indeterminate species exiting the animal byre with ringed standard, while four human figures stand and sit surrounded by covered vessels of various shapes. The emblem or standard atop the byre in this seal image, which resembles the protocuneiform NUN sign, appears in similar contexts on an unprovenienced seal at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford,[17] on a stone vessel fragment at the Louvre,[18]on a seal impression from Jamdat Naṣr,[19] and on a seal (Figure 8a, see page 279) and a stone bowl from Khafāja.[20] These examples also include similar vessel shapes to those depicted on the Eana sealings, such as the single-handled jar with pointed base that resembles the protocuneiform KISIM and DUG_a signs for dairy containers.[21] The triangular vessels depicted on the Eana sealings, the

[15] The preliminary reports assigned these sealings to the Uruk V period on the basis of the brick types found in association with them. Rainer Michael Boehmer, however, has disputed this dating criterium and argued instead for an Uruk IV date. See R. M. Boehmer, *Uruk: früheste Siegelabrollungen* (Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1999), 86. The reverse impressions on several of these sealings indicate attachment to door pegs or other architectural posts: Boehmer, *Uruk*, 86; see also Roger J. Matthews, "Clay Sealings in Early Dynastic Mesopotamia: A Functional and Contextual Approach" (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 1989), 76.

[16] Mark A. Brandes, *Siegelabrollungen aus den archaischen Bauschichten in Uruk-Warka* (Franz Steiner Verlag, 1979), 226-233 and Taf. 31-32 (W 20 689, W 21 110, and W 21 060,17). These artifacts were deposited together with a trove of Uruk IV tablets above the burnt destruction layer marking the end of phase IVa.

[17] Ashmolean Museum, AN 1964.744; Amiet, *Glyptique mésopotamienne archaïque*, no. 1613.

[18] Musée du Louvre, AO 8842.

[19] Roger J. Matthews, Cities, Seals and Writing: Archaic Seal Impressions from Jemdet Nasr and Ur (Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1993), no. 23.

[20] Henri Frankfort, *Stratified Cylinder Seals from the Diyala Region* (University of Chicago Press, 1955), no. 33 (excavation no. Kh.VII:260); and Pinhas Delougaz and Seton Lloyd, *Pre-Sargonid Temples in the Diyala Region* (The University of Chicago Press, 1942), 104, fig. 98 (excavation no. Kh.V:14).

[21] Robert K. Englund, "Late Uruk Cattle and Dairy Products: Evidence from Proto-Cuneiform Sources," *Bulletin on Sumerian Agriculture* 8 (1995): 45; idem, "Texts from the Late Uruk Period," in *Mesopotamien: Späturuk-Zeit und Frühdynastische Zeit*, ed. Josef Bauer, Robert K. Englund, and Manfred Krebernik (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998), 159, fig. 54, and 168, fig. 160.

Ashmolean seal, and the Khafāja seal may represent the short sides of feeding troughs, as Frankfort and Delougaz suggest,[22] but they also bear a striking resemblance to the Uruk IV-III-period NI sign, which depicts another container for dairy fat.[23]

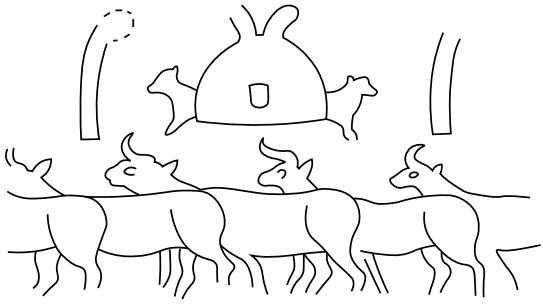

Figure 4. Drawing after seal impression from Uruk (Warkā'), Iraq. Redrawn by the author, after Delougaz, "Animals Emerging from a Hut," fig. 2.

Another variant on the byre with standards appears in the Eana IV glyptic corpus at Uruk, with the standard taking the form of a looped reed bundle like that which formed the basis of the $MUŠ_3$ sign used to write the name of the goddess Inana.[24] Such a symbol appears flanking a cattle byre in the upper register of a seal impression (Figure 4) on a numerical tablet from the vicinity of the Red Temple.[25] The looped-reed standard is also associated with a byre facade on the Uruk trough in the British Museum,[26] on an inlaid stone bowl in the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin,[27] and on an unprovenienced seal in the Louvre.[28]

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[22] Frankfort, *Stratified Cylinder Seals*, 14; Pinhas Delougaz, "Animals Emerging from a Hut," *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Studies* 27, no. 3 (1968): 193 n. 11.

[23] Englund, "Cattle and Dairy Products," 45; idem, "Texts from the Late Uruk Period," 168, fig. 60.

[24] Krystyna Szarzyńska, "Some of the Oldest Cult Symbols in Archaic Uruk," *Jaarbericht van Vooraziatisch-egyptisch Genootschap "Ex Oriente Lux"* 30 (1989): 3-21; Piotr Steinkeller, "Inanna's Archaic Symbol," in *Written on Clay and Stone: Ancient Near Eastern Studies Presented to Krystyna Szarzyńska on the Occasion of Her 80th Birthday*, ed. Jan Braun et al. (Agade, 1998), 87-97 and figs. 1-10.

[25] Boehmer, *Uruk*, Abb. 53, W9656gc; for the transliterated text, see Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (CDLI) no. P001598. The Jamdat Naṣr seal cited above (Matthews, *Cities, Seals and Writing*, no. 24) was also impressed on a tablet, which is classified as an account for barley and emmer (CDLI no. P005106).

[26] British Museum, BM 120000 / 1928,07.14.

[27] Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin, VA 7236; see Amiet, *Glyptique mésopotamienne*, no. 624.

[28] Musée du Louvre, KLQ 17; Amiet, *Glyptique mésopotamienne*, no. 632.

A sealing (Figure 5) from the Uruk "colony" site of Ḥabūba Kabīra South,[29] contemporary with the Uruk IV phase at Uruk-Warkā', also includes animals emerging from a byre in conjunction with a seated human figure grasping a large vessel and a file of animals (probably sheep or goats[30]) suckling their young. Here, the human figure in the upper register holds the round-bottomed pot in a very similar fashion to figures on many seal impressions from the Early Dynastic I at Ur;[31] here and in the Ur examples, the activity depicted is most likely churning, and the connection with dairy production appears strengthened by the imagery of young animals feeding from their lactating mothers.

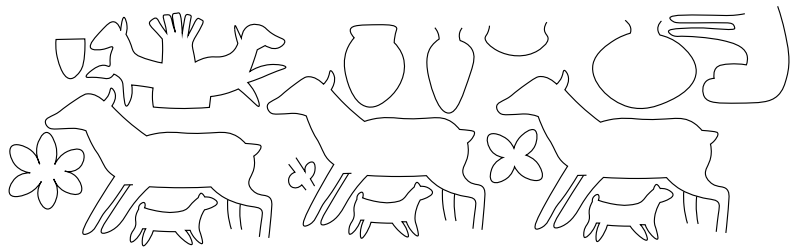

Figure 5. Drawing after seal impressions from Ḥabūba Kabīra, Syria. Redrawn by the author, after Strommenger, Sürenhagen, and Rittig, *Die Kleinfunde*, S.32.

These examples of byre scenes from the Late Uruk period share several characteristics which set them apart from the temple/herd seals that appeared subsequently. The Late Uruk examples exclusively portray bovine and caprine figures beside the human-built structures where such animals would be reared and sheltered, as indicated by the young animals often depicted emerging from the buildings. These animals and buildings

[29] Excavation no. M II:157; Eva Strommenger, Dietrich Sürenhagen, and Dessa Rittig, *Die Kleinfunde von Habuba Kabira-Süd* (Harrassowitz Verlag, 2014), Taf. 193.4 (S.32).

[30] A similar depiction of a hornless female caprine suckling a kid, in this case surrounded by curly-horned males, is to be found in another seal image from Ḥabūba Kabīra: see Strommenger, Sürenhagen, and Rittig, *Kleinfunde*, Taf. 194.1 (S.37).

[31] L. Legrain, *Ur Excavations, Volume III: Archaic Seal-Impressions* (Trustees of the British Museum and the University Museum, 1936), nos. 45, 337-344, and 348-349.

are sometimes paired with human workers and vessels. The ages of the animals vary, and young calves, lambs, or kids appear frequently, sometimes interacting with their parents or elders. There are strong iconographic suggestions that the scenes depicted relate to dairy production, and the sealings and containers that bore these images may also have had functional connections to animal rearing and to handling dairy products. The Uruk trough is perhaps the most obvious case, where the shape of the vessel suggests it may have been used to feed or give water for the types of animals depicted in the relief. Irene Winter has also suggested that stone bowls with byre and animal file images might have held dairy products given as temple offerings.[32] Functional relationships between the seal impressions and dairy production are more tenuous, although the best preserved of the Eana Building C sealings has the characteristic shape of a large jar stopper that could have been used on a covered vessel, much like those depicted in the seal image.[33] More generally, we can observe that the seals portraying byre scenes in the Late Uruk period had definite administrative functions (even if the precise nature of those functions remains incompletely known): they were used to close storage vessels or facilities and to mark accounting tablets. As discussed below, the temple/herd seals from the Diyala region and other

[32] Irene J. Winter, "Representing Abundance: The Visual Dimension of the Agrarian State," in *Settlement and Society: Essays Dedicated to Robert McCormick Adams*, ed. Elizabeth Stone (Cotsen Institute, 2006), 123. This suggestion is speculative but appealing; although Winter specifies that such containers were for "milk," they might also have held butter or ghee, as suggested by the resemblance to the NI sign—see n. 22 above.

[33] Brandes, *Siegelabrollungen*, Taf. 32, W 20 689.

sites in southern Mesopotamia have no comparable evidence for administrative use.

Figure 6. Modern impression of a cylinder seal (W 14819r) from Uruk (Warkā'), Iraq. Basmachi, *Cylinder Seals in the Iraq Museum*, no. 53.

An example of the new temple/herd genre[34] (Figure 6) appears among the varied finds in the *Sammelfund* deposit at Uruk, which is generally assigned to the Eana III phase, post-dating the end of the Late Uruk period.[35] This seal depicts two animals of different species, the first a bovine and the second an ungulate with long, straight horns, who is most likely an oryx.[36] Here, the structure is no round- or open-topped byre, but a rectangular building with a paneled facade which resembles the temple structures before which rulers and other officiants perform rituals in

[34] Ernst Heinrich, *Kleinfunde aus den archaischen Tempelschichten in Uruk* (Kommissionsverlag Otto Harrassowitz, 1936), Taf. 19, W14819r. Another temple-herd seal was reportedly acquired "in der Nähe von Warka" in 1915, but its precise provenience is unknown: see Anton Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Steinschneidekunst* (Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1988 [1940]), cat. no. 7.

[35] On the Sammelfund context (Pa XVI2) and its dating, see Heinrich, *Kleinfunde*, 1-6 and 9-10; Manfred Robert Behm-Blancke, *Das Tierbild in der altmesopotamischen Rundplastik: eine Untersuchung zum Stilwandel des frühsumerischen Rundbildes* (Philipp von Zabern, 1979), 52-53; Ricardo Eichmann, *Uruk: Die Stratigraphie. Grabungen 1912-1977 in den Bereichen 'Eanna' und Anu-Ziqqurat'* (Philipp von Zabern, 1989), 176; Edith Porada et al., "The Chronology of Mesopotamia, ca. 7000-1600 B.C.," in *Chronologies in Old World Archaeology*, 3rd edition, ed. Robert W. Ehrich (The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 101.

[36] Cf. Burchard Brentjes, "Gazellen und Antilopen als Vorläufer der Haustiere im Alten Orient," *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, Gesellschafts- und Sprachwissenschaftliche Reihe* 11, no. 6 (1962): 540 and Taf. II.16; Anne Devillers, "Did the Arabian Oryx Occur in Iran?" *Iranica Antiqua* 48 (2013): 1-19 and fig. 2.

various Uruk-period seals.[37] Although the bovine figure and the vessels in the upper part of the field recall the earlier byre scenes, the oryx and the temple facade clearly distinguish this seal from its byre-motif precursors.

Figure 7. Modern impression of a cylinder seal from Ĝirsu (Tello), Iraq. Delaporte, *Catalogue des cylindres I*, pl. 3.1, T.25.

Other examples of the temple/herd genre have been found at various sites in southern Iraq, including at Šuruppak (Fāra),[38] Ĝirsu (Tello) (Figure 7),[39] and Nippur (Nuffar).[40] Of these, only the example from Nippur (from Inana Temple level VIII) has a well-recorded archaeological context, although there is reason to believe that this isolated seal pre-dates the building level in which it was deposited by a significant period, perhaps centuries.[41]

The temple/herd seal genre is heavily concentrated in the Diyala region to the east and north of modern Baghdad.[42] The earliest temple/herd seals

[37] E.g., Amiet, *Glyptique mésopotamienne*, pl. 13A and 13E, and nos. 642, 656, and 658.

[38] Harriet P. Martin, Fara: A Reconstruction of the Ancient Mesopotamian City of Shuruppak (C. Martin, 1988), nos. 19 and 20.

[39] Louvre MNB 1342; Ernest de Sarzec and Léon Heuzey, *Découvertes en Chaldée* (Ernest Leroux, 1884-1912), pl. 30.1; Louis Delaporte, *Catalogue des cylindres orientaux: cachets et pierres gravées du Musée du Louvre I: fouilles et missions* (Librairie Hachette, 1920), no. T.25.

[40] Faraj Basmachi, *Al-akhtām al-usṭuwāniyya fī al-maṭḥaf al-'irāqī (ūrūk wa jamdat naṣr)* / Cylinder Seals in the Iraq Museum: Uruk and Jamdat Nasr Periods (Nabu Publications, 1994), no. 56; excavation no. 7N 331.

[41] The domed or conical top of the seal is a feature commonly attested on cylinders from the Late Uruk and Jamdat Naṣr periods, but this seal shape appears to have fallen out of fashion by the time of Inana Temple VIII, which is datable to the end of the Early Dynastic I.

[42] This concentration might in part be a result of the general abundance of excavated glyptic evidence from the Diyala, providing a larger sample size than is available for most other sites of the same period. The absence of temple/herd seal designs in some of the more substantial glyptic assemblages that should overlap chronologically

from the Diyala come from the so-called Sin Temple at the site of Khafāja. One (Kh.VII:70) was found beneath Sin Temple I, the earliest level of the building, although the architectural context for this work is unclear, and the description of its locus in the published catalogue conflicts with the recorded elevation.[43] Better contextual information is available for the seals from Sin Temple levels II through IV, which the excavators attributed to the Protoliterate c (levels II-III) and d (level IV), the former contemporary with the Eana IV phase at Uruk and the latter with the Uruk III or Jamdat Naṣr period (ca. 3100-2900 BCE) that followed the end of the Late Uruk.[44] Based on Karen L. Wilson's work comparing the Diyala material with the Inana Temple sequence at Nippur, Sin IV may be

with the motif's greatest popularity in the Diyala (e.g., from Ur and Jamdat Naṣr), however, suggests that the apparent concentration reflects a real regional difference.

[43] The seal in question is Henri Frankfort, *Stratified Cylinder Seals from the Diyala Region* (The University of Chicago Press, 1955), no. 284 (excavation no. Kh.VII:70). Frankfort lists the context as "below Houses 12," but the recorded elevation for this object would in fact place it below Sin I: see Jean M. Evans, "Redefining the Sculpture of Early Dynastic Mesopotamia" (PhD diss., New York University, 2005), 175 n. 28.

[44] Pinhas Delougaz and Seton Lloyd, *Pre-Sargonid Temples in the Diyala Region* (The University of Chicago Press, 1942), 8-9 n. 10.

reassigned to the Early Dynastic I, despite the continued use of *Riemchen* rather than plano-convex bricks.[45]

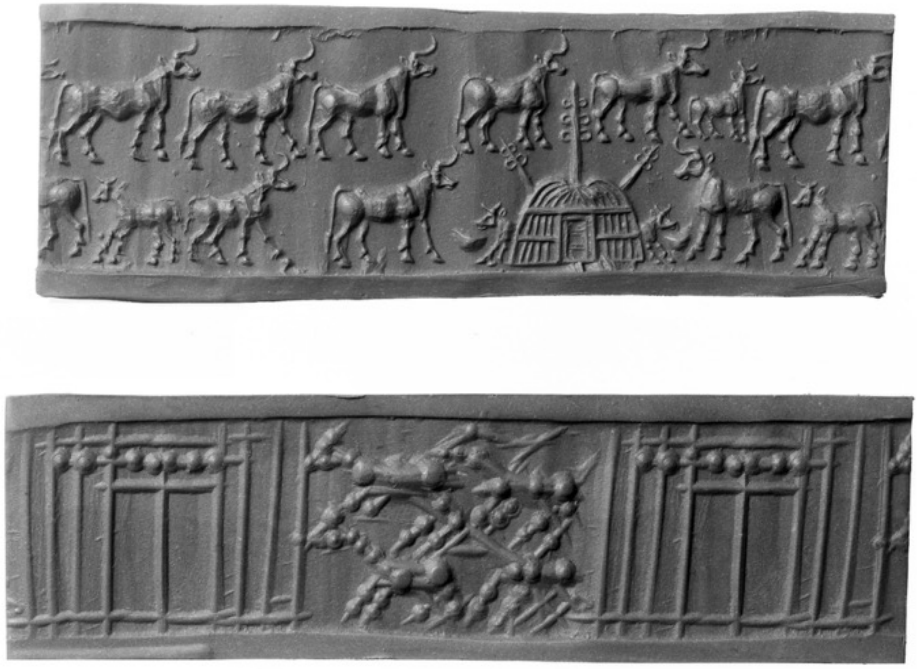

Figure 8a-b. Modern impressions of cylinder seals Kh.VII:260 (a) and Kh.VII:257 (b) from Sin Temple II, Tutub (Khafāja), Iraq. Photos from the Diyala Archaeological Database, courtesy of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures of the University of Chicago.

The four temple/herd seals from Sin II (Kh.VII:255; Kh.VII:257 = Figure 8b; Kh.VII:269; and Kh.VII:274) were found in the "large and extremely interesting group of cylinder seals"[46] from Q 42:41, one of the rooms along the northeast side of the temple sanctuary, together with other animal

[45] Karen L. Wilson, "Nippur: The Definition of a Mesopotamian Ğamdat Naṣr Assemblage," in *Ğamdat Naṣr: Period or Regional Style?* ed. Uwe Finkbeiner and Wolfgang Röllig (Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1986), 65-66; see also Porada et al., "Chronology of Mesopotamia," 102.

[46] Delougaz and Lloyd, *Pre-Sargonid Temples*, 16.

file seals that evince similar use of drilling or boring on both the bodies and limbs of the animals. The Sin III seals (Kh.VII:90; Kh.VII:93 = Figure 9; and Kh.VII:125) came from Q 42:26, a room similarly placed on the northeast side of the sanctuary, near the altar. This room appears to have functioned as a sort of treasury, as the "seals, amulets, and pendants" and other valuable objects from Sin III were concentrated within it.[47] One temple/herd seal (Kh.VIII:63) was found at a level between Sin III and IV, and six more came from Sin IV proper (Kh.V:307; Kh.VI:159 = Figure 10; Kh.VI:161; Kh.VI:162; Kh.VI:165; Kh.VI:174; and Kh.VI:190). Of these, five were in the main sanctuary (Q 42:24), while one was in a room (Q 42:19) in the same position as Q 42:26 from Sin III.

Figure 9. Modern impression of cylinder seal Kh.VII:93 from Sin Temple III, Tutub (Khafāja), Iraq. Photo from the Diyala Archaeological Database, courtesy of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures of the University of Chicago.

[47] Delougaz and Lloyd, *Pre-Sargonid Temples*, 18.

Figure 10. Modern impression of cylinder seal Kh.VI:159 from Sin Temple IV, Tutub (Khafāja), Iraq. Photo from the Diyala Archaeological Database, courtesy of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures of the University of Chicago.

One further temple/herd seal from Khafāja (Kh.I:386) was found in the earliest level of the Temple Oval, a structure typically dated somewhere between the late Early Dynastic I (ca. 2900-2675 BCE) and the Early Dynastic IIIa (ca. 2575-2450 BCE).[48] The seal comes from K45:6, a room on the perimeter of the temple courtyard that contained a square pillar and two large, ovoid installations for fire.[49] This context is exceptional, not only because it is later than any of the other loci that yielded temple/herd seals at Khafāja, but because it is not immediately connected to the main sanctuary of the temple. If, as the large fireplaces suggest, K45:6 and its adjacent suite of rooms was an area for craft production or food preparation, then the discovery of the seal in this location may provide rare evidence for the genre's administrative function prior to (or alongside) its better attested use in votive deposits. Because some of the other temple/herd seals show signs of wear indicative of an extended period of handling before their deposition, it is possible that they acted as

[48] Porada et al. "Chronology of Mesopotamia," 105; Jean M. Evans, "The Square Temple at Tell Asmar and the Construction of Early Dynastic Mesopotamia," *American Journal of Archaeology* 111, no. 4 (2007): 630.

[49] Pinhas Delougaz, *The Temple Oval at Khafājah* (The University of Chicago Press, 1940), 34 and 36, figs. 31-32.

items of personal adornment or as tokens of identity.[50] How long they might have remained in use or in circulation is another difficult question, and the Oval I seal may well have been made close in time to the context in which it was found, or it may have been an "heirloom" made several generations prior.

The issue of "heirlooms" for the dating of temple/herd seals becomes especially problematic in the context of the Šara Temple at Tell Agrab, where the second major corpus of such seals from the Diyala region was found. Because Henri Frankfort, who was responsible for the publication of the Diyala glyptic, had identified temple/herd seals as a hallmark of the Jamdat Naṣr assemblage at Khafāja, he supposed that the Šara Temple seals of the same genre, found in levels dated to the later Early Dynastic I, must have been works of Jamdat Naṣr date retained in the temple for a long time before their final deposition. Jean M. Evans, however, has argued persuasively that the stylistic variability between the Sin and Šara Temple seals indicates that the latter generally post-date the former and are therefore roughly contemporary with their (ED I) contexts.[51]

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[50] Frankfort (*Stratified Cylinder Seals*, 59) notes, for instance, that Ag.35:891a had "both ends of perforation enlarged by rubbing of string," suggesting a period of active handling before it was deposited in the Šara Temple. Cf. the suggestion that, notwithstanding the absence of impressions, temple/herd seals had an administrative role as items of personal adornment that helped "somehow to identify the economic and social position of certain individuals" in Holly Pittman, *The Glazed Steatite Glyptic Style: The Structure and Function of an Image System in the Administration of Protoliterate Mesopotamia* (Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1994), 65 n. 72.

[51] Evans, "Redefining the Sculpture," 175-180; idem, *The Lives of Sumerian Sculpture: An Archaeology of the Early Dynastic Temple* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 236-237 and n. 24. For another recent treatment of the "heirlooms" question in the Diyala artifact corpus, see Karen L. Wilson, "A Question of Heirlooms," in *From Sherds to Landscapes: Studies on the Ancient Near East in Honor of McGuire Gibson*, ed. Mark Altaweel and Carrie Hritz (The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2021), 259-280. Evans's main distinction between the Sin and Šara Temple seals is the use, in the latter, of varied orientations of the animals as a means of enlivening the compositions, which is true only of three seals out of the sixteen depicting temple/herd scenes from the Šara Temple. The same stylistic device is also present on a seal from Sin IV depicting a herd without a facade (Kh.VI:163), which, although it undermines a straightforward contrast between the Sin and Šara glyptic, ultimately reinforces Evans's attribution of this innovation to the ED I (see discussion of Wilson's ED I dating of Sin IV above). A general trend towards including more animal figures in denser compositions is observable in the Šara Temple corpus, but it must also be acknowledged that one- or two-figure compositions similar to those typical in the Sin Temple continue to appear

The temple/herd seals from the Šara temple range from elevations of 30.00 to 32.65 meters,[52] or from the "Earlier Building" to the second occupation of the "Main Level" identified by Lloyd in the excavation report.[53] Of the sixteen temple/herd seals from the Šara temple, one (Ag.36:346) was found in M 14:15, a shrine with an altar in the "Earlier Building" level,[54] one (Ag.36:372) in M 14:10, a storeroom off the courtyard near that shrine,[55] and one (Ag.35:1067) in N 13:4, a small room on the other side of the courtyard that seems to have functioned as a storeroom for "objects of a type usually found in the neighborhood of a sanctuary."[56] One final seal (Ag.35:919) assigned to this earlier phase was found in N 13:1, a room disconnected from the rest of the "Earlier Building" complex.

Of the temple/herd seals assigned to the "Main Level" of the Šara Temple, one (Ag.35:730) was found in L 13:4, identified as a secondary shrine.[57] Two seals (Ag.35:891 and Ag.35:965) were found in M 14:4 at an elevation of 31.5 meters and a third (Ag.35:660) in the same room at 32.5 meters; the difference in elevation is likely caused by the digging of several pits for hoards of objects in the floor of M 14:4,[58] although the publications do not specify that the seals were found within these pits. The room, including the sub-floor object hoards, appears once more to have been a kind of

frequently at Tell Agrab, and that four-figure compositions are already present in Sin II and III (Kh.VII:257 and Kh.VII:90).

[52] The elevations from the Diyala excavations were measured from arbitrary datums forty meters below the mound surface at a given point: see Delougaz, *Temple Oval*, 5 n. 5; Delougaz and Lloyd, *Pre-Sargonid Temples*, 9 n. 11.

[53] The internal chronology of the Šara temple is difficult to resolve, and based on the elevations for various floor levels and objects provided in the report, different scholars have proposed different phasing schemes. See Evans, "Redefining the Sculpture," 119-165; Gianni Marchesi and Niccolò Marchetti, *Royal Statuary of Early Dynastic Mesopotamia* (Eisenbrauns, 2011), 24-28. Fortunately, these issues have little consequence for the interpretations of the temple/herd seals proposed here.

[54] Delougaz and Lloyd, *Pre-Sargonid Temples*, 255.

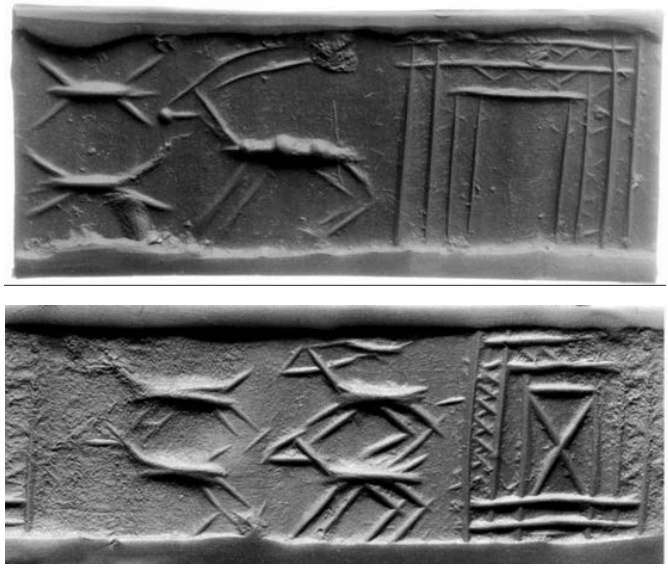
[55] Lloyd (in Delougaz and Lloyd, *Pre-Sargonid Temples*, 260) notes that although M14:10 does not communicate with M14:12 or the courtyard (M13:10) in the published plan, M14:10 and M14:12 were probably connected originally.

[56] Delougaz and Lloyd, *Pre-Sargonid Temples*, 227.

[57] Delougaz and Lloyd, *Pre-Sargonid Temples*, 248.

[58] Delougaz and Lloyd, *Pre-Sargonid Temples*, 243-245.

treasury adjacent to the main shrine, in which were deposited valuable votive objects and temple furnishings.

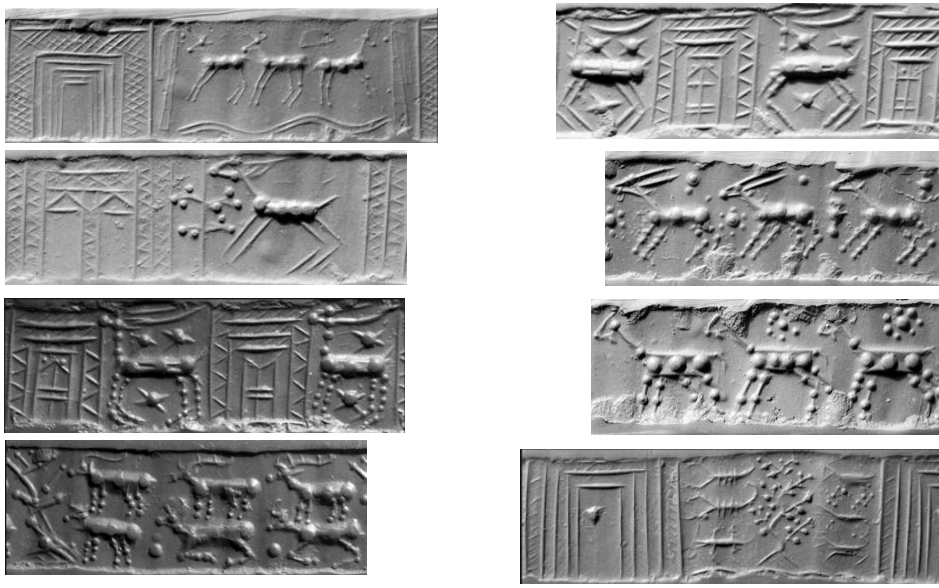


Figures 11a-b. Modern impressions of cylinder seals (Ag.35:614 and Ag.35:615) found in a stone bowl set into the lowest step of the altar in Shara Temple M14:2, Tell Agrab, Iraq. Photos from the Diyala Archaeological Database, courtesy of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures of the University of Chicago.

Figure 12. Hoard of objects from altar in M14:2, Šara Temple, Tell Agrab. After Delougaz and Lloyd, *Pre-Sargonid Temples*, 237, fig. 184. Courtesy of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures of the University of Chicago.

The main group of temple/herd seals in the Main Level of the Šara Temple was found in close association with the altar of the main sanctuary, M 14:2. These were split between two deposits. The first, comprising two seals (Ag.35:614-15 = Figures 11a-b), was discovered inside a stone bowl that had been embedded in the lowest step of the "high altar," which, according to Lloyd, would have received liquid from libations made on the altar.[59] The second deposit (Ag.36:245-249 and Ag.36:251-253 = Figures 13a-h) was found inside the main structure of the altar itself, in what is described as a "rectangular hole [which] had been cut in the side of the altar" during the earlier occupation, containing in addition to eleven seals "about forty" maceheads and "various amulets and copper objects" (Figure 12).[60] Lloyd reports that this interior chamber of the altar had been blocked up and plastered, but that at some later point "someone had recalled the existence of this hoard of valuables and had sunk a small shaft from above in search of them," approximately fifty centimeters off target.[61]

[59] Delougaz and Lloyd, *Pre-Sargonid Temples*, 233.
[60] Delougaz and Lloyd, *Pre-Sargonid Temples*, 238.
[61] Delougaz and Lloyd, *Pre-Sargonid Temples*, 238.



Figures 13a-h. Modern impressions of cylinder seals (Ag.36:245-249 and Ag.36:251-253) from the interior cavity of the altar in Šara Temple M14:2, Tell Agrab, Iraq. Photos from Diyala Archaeological Database, courtesy of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures of the University of Chicago.

With this summary of the excavated temple/herd seal corpus in hand, we can observe several important differences between this genre and the Uruk byre scenes. First: that whereas the byre motif seems to have been lightly concentrated at Uruk and in southern Mesopotamia, the temple/herd seals were far more popular in the Diyala region than in the south. The temple/herd seals may have had some broadly "administrative" function as markers of official or professional roles or statuses, but their only archaeologically well-documented use is as votives or as elements of temple inventories, usually stored or cached in the main sanctuary or adjacent storeroom of a temple.[62]

[62] As Frankfort (*Stratified Cylinder Seals*, 16) notes, the dearth of impressions from temple/herd seals is not merely a reflection of the generally low quantities of seal impressions in the Diyala sites, as impressions from other seal types were found in levels contemporary with those that yielded temple/herd cylinders.

The temple/herds that flourished in the post-Uruk Diyala contrast sharply with the Uruk byre scenes in both their iconography and their function. In anticipation of the interpretive discussion below, it is useful to note the fundamental difference between the two genres, to dispel the notion that the latter was merely a regional or chronological variant on the former. Compare, for instance, the two seals from the same level (II) and locus (Q42:41) of the Sin Temple: the first (Figure 8a), a byre seal, and the second (Figure 8b), a temple/herd design. In the first image, we see stacked files of standing bovines, in static profile, as if posing to allow the seal-cutter to observe the finer points of their anatomy. The byre facade is enfolded amid the herd, and from it spring the foreparts of two calves, their horns just starting to grow. Frankfort imagined that this scene was "the return of the herd in the evening from the grazing grounds to the byre, where the calves are seen coming forth to greet their dams,"[63] while Delougaz suggested that the calves emerging from the byre might also be read as a metaphor for birth, and that the byre might properly be seen as a "birthing hut."[64] The byre scene emphasizes the centrality of the byre in the productive and reproductive cycles of the animals. It is in this way similar to the Ḥabūba Kabīra seals depicting animal byres and pens amid scenes of mating, suckling, and churning milk, highlighting the reproduction of offspring in conjunction with the production of milk. In the Khafāja byre seal, the cyclicality of emergence from and return to the byre is suggested by the variable orientations of the animals depicted, symmetrically confronted on either side of the byre. This cyclicality reinforces the cycles of generation and maturation suggested by the presence of calves emerging from the byre and interspersed with the files of adults. The byre thus constitutes a site of generation and sustenance, an architectural adjunct to the (re)productive animal body. In the same

[63] Frankfort, Stratified Cylinder Seals, 14.

[64] Delougaz, "Animals Emerging from a Hut," 194-197.

way that the human usurps an animal familial role by taking milk from the mother in the juxtaposed suckling animal and human dairy worker on the Ḥabūba Kabīra seal, the human-made structure of the byre acts, as Delougaz observes, almost like a surrogate parental body, subsuming, overseeing, and structuring the animals' life cycles.

None of this is evident in the temple/herd designs. The fleetingly carved and flighty animals on the Sin II temple/herd seal (Figure 8b) are, in direct contrast with those surrounding the byre, both highly mobile and unproductive. The positioning of the forelegs at a forward diagonal (//) and the hindlegs bent in a sharp sideways V (») emphasizes their movement, which is echoed also in the cresting waves of their horns. On this seal, the overlap of the animals above and below is particularly effective in conveying the collective yet particulate motions of the herd, as the line of one animal's horn cuts across the legs of another animal, crossing at the tops of the forelegs where they meet the torso and nearly merging with the downward sweep of the hindlegs, a diagonal line taken up again by the neck of another animal below, and so becoming a (perhaps intentional) evocation of leaping movement: the simultaneous downward bend of the back legs and the raising of the front just before pushing off the ground, or the abstracted trajectory of the whole body upwards and downwards as it gallops forward. The relationships among the animals are not marked as parental—nor do we see any suggestion of maternal or familial bonds within the herds on other seals of this type. Instead, the herd is bound together more abstractly, by lines of motion that crisscross their bodies. The abstraction and linearization of these bodies powerfully evoke the image of a herd of animals, whose rapid movement renders them indistinct and poorly particularized within their collectivity. For the social relations that bind together the individuals within the herd, and

especially those that bind the herd to the temple, we need a different conceptual vocabulary.

Interpreting the Temple/Herd

Much of the existing scholarship on the temple/herd seals emphasizes their continuity with the Uruk byre scenes and folds them into narratives of progressive domestication. Prototypical of such interpretations is Léon Legrain's comment in a 1925 catalogue, that temple/herd seals such as Figure 14 "oppose to the wild hunting scenes [of other early Mesopotamian glyptic], the ideas of enclosure, residence, house of the shepherd and tame cattle."[65] In a world organized around the dichotomy between the wild and the domestic, the temple-herd images that so plainly thematize the connection, however imprecisely articulated, between nonhuman animals and the physical structure of the temple household, should fall squarely on the side of domesticity.

Figure 14. Modern impression of a cylinder seal. Legrain, *Culture of the Babylonians*, no. 50.

[65] L. Legrain, *The Culture of the Babylonians from Their Seals in the Collections of the Museum* (The University Museum, 1925), 171, cat. no. 50. The seal was purchased in Jerusalem in 1913 with the dubious provenience of "Gezer, Palestine" evidently provided by the dealer.

A more precise identification of the sorts of animals depicted in these seals, however, could undercut some of the connotations of domesticity that Legrain considered paramount. It is not at all evident that these animals must fall under the domains of "the shepherd and tame cattle." Already in 1883, Joachim Ménant had identified the animals on a poorly preserved temple-herd seal (Figure 15) as two gazelles,[66] and Louis Delaporte, nearly forty years later, described the animals in a seal from Tello (Ĝirsu) (Figure 7) as antelopes walking towards a doorway.[67] (Legrain's description of the seal in the Penn Museum likewise characterizes the animals depicted as antelopes.) In Elizabeth Douglas van Buren's 1939 monograph on visual representations of the fauna of ancient Mesopotamia—the apogee of early twentieth-century Mesopotamian art historical scholarship's attempts at zoological precision—the handful of Diyala temple-herd seals that had then been published in Frankfort's preliminary reports and articles in the *Illustrated London News* are divided between depictions of gazelles and those other antelopes.[68]

Figure 15. Drawing after a cylinder seal. Ménant, *Les pierres gravées*, 51, fig. 19.

Henri Frankfort wrote his history of Western Asian cylinder seals (published in the same year as van Buren's book) with the benefit of access

[66] Joachim Ménant, Les pierres gravées de la Haute-Asie: recherches sur la glyptique orientale, première partie: cylindres de la Chaldée (Maisonneuve et C^{ie}, 1883), 51, fig. 19.

[67] Delaporte, *Catalogue*, 3, no. T.25.

[68] E. Douglas van Buren, *The Fauna of Ancient Mesopotamia as Represented in Art* (Pontificium Institutum Biblicum, 1939), 43-48.

to the full corpus of excavated glyptic from Khafāja and Tell Agrab.[69] Frankfort's treatment of the temple-herd seals in that work is succinct: contrasting the Uruk byres with the Jamdat Naṣr temple/herds, he writes that in the latter period "the sacred flock is habitually represented beside the shrine to which it belongs," and that because no impressions of temple/herd cylinders had yet (nor have to this day) been found, "[i]t may be that they had only their shape in common with the seals and served in reality a dedicatory purpose."[70]

In his 1955 catalogue of the seals from the Diyala sites,[71] Frankfort once more characterizes the Jamdat Naṣr temple/herd motif as a reinterpretation of the distinct byre and temple-facade themes found in earlier Uruk-period seal images. Again citing the absence of impressions from such seals, as well as the concentration of temple/herd seals in temple contexts rather than private houses, Frankfort speculates that these objects "might have been amulets, commemorative medals, or the like, or substitutes for sheep or kids which were to be donated to the temple. For all such objects a representation of the sacred herd would be an appropriate decoration."[72] Notably, the reference to "sheep or kids" and the frequent references to the temple/herd motif as "temple-and-flock" belie the fact that both sheep and kids (or juvenile animals in general) are conspicuously absent in most of the temple/herd designs, in sharp contrast to the prominence of sheep and lambs in the Late Uruk byre scenes. It is apparent that Frankfort considers the species of animals represented relatively unimportant, even if the animal figures on the

[69] Henri Frankfort, Cylinder Seals: A Documentary Essay in the Art and Religion of the Ancient Near East (Gregg Press, 1939).

[70] Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, 33.

[71] Idem, *Stratified Cylinder Seals from the Diyala Region* (The University of Chicago Press, 1955).

[72] Frankfort, *Stratified Cylinder Seals*, 17. Cf. Edith Porada, *Mesopotamian Art in Cylinder Seals of the Pierpont Morgan Library* (The Pierpont Morgan Library, 1947), 18: "Whether [the temple/herd seals] were given in place of the animals that in all periods constituted the principal offerings to the Mesopotamian gods, or merely accompanied such offerings, we can only conjecture."

seals are meant to be substitutes for real animal offerings, and especially if the temple/herd genre is a symbolic reference to a generic notion of fertility: "[s]ince a combination of ruminant and plant or tree refers to the gods of fertility, it is apparently immaterial which plants or animals are depicted in any given instance."[73] It is therefore permissible, because these animals' "rendering is usually too conventionalized for us to be certain of the species or even the genus of the animal which is depicted," to "use 'goat' as a convenient general term" for most of the horned ungulates in the temple/herd designs.[74]

The generic "goats" are easier to accommodate in a history of early Mesopotamian art as evidence for the "domesticating" ideology of the early city-states. Such a metanarrative permeates the foundational works of scholarship on Early Dynastic glyptic, particularly those of Frankfort's contemporary, Anton Moortgat. Moortgat's 1935 *Frühe Bildkunst in Sumer* considers the transition from the Uruk to the "Djemdet Nasr" period as one from a more archaic iconographic repertoire focusing on wild animals to a new domestic animal-focused set of motifs.[75] If the development of Sumerian art is to be narrated as an evolution towards domesticity, then the temple-herd seals ought to be, as Legrain wrote, visions of docile animals belonging as domestic property to the temple household. Also in echo of Legrain's model of a development away from an older "Elamite" hunting iconography towards images of "tame cattle," Ursula Moortgat-Correns's review of the Diyala corpus published by Frankfort sharply distinguishes between the Sumerian and (Proto-Elamite) Iranian lines of influence in the early third millennium Diyala glyptic based on the respective emphases on domestic versus wild animals, with the

[73] Frankfort, Stratified Cylinder Seals, 16.
[74] Frankfort, *Stratified Cylinder Seals*, 16 and 18 n. 38.
[75] Anton Moortgat, *Frühe Bildkunst in Sumer* (J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1935), 81.

temple/herd ("Tempelherde vor einem Tempeleingang") motif being entirely "Sumerian" in derivation.[76]

For those scholars who have recognized that many of the animals depicted in the temple/herd seals (gazelles, deer, oryxes, ibexes) do not fall among the "tame cattle" subject to intensive animal husbandry in early Mesopotamia, there are two ways of reconciling these particularities of species with the larger narrative trajectory of the history of Mesopotamian animal artworks towards domesticity. The first is, in Frankfort's fashion, to subsume all animals under the general concept of "fertility" or "abundance." The second is to posit that the animals depicted in the temple/herd seals were also brought into the domestic sphere by capture and taming. Pierre Amiet favors the latter proposition in *La glyptique mésopotamienne archaïque*, writing that antelopes and cervids would normally live "à l'état sauvage," but that they might have been captured for breeding ("pour en faire l'élevage").[77] Amiet notes that this practice is attested at an early period in Egypt. Burchard Brentjes devotes a more detailed study to the same phenomenon of "proto-domestication" of gazelles and antelopes in Egypt and Western Asia in an article of 1962, using the temple/herd images as evidence for the semi-domestic condition of these animals in early Sumer.[78] The frequent representation of antelopes in conjunction with human-made structures serves to support the argument that animal husbandry in Western Asia and North Africa began with keeping herds of antelopes as "meat

[76] Ursula Moortgat-Correns, "Bemerkungen zur Glyptik des Diyala-Gebietes," *Orientalische Literaturzeitung* 54, no. 7 (1959): 343. For a countervailing opinion (*viz.*, that the Diyala temple/herds are evidence of only a limited and selective engagement with southern/Urukean ideas), cf. Wolfram Nagel, *Djamdat Nasr-Kulturen und frühdynastische Buntkeramiker* (Verlag Bruno Hessling, 1964), 43.

[77] Amiet, Glyptique mésopotamienne, 77.

[78] Brentjes, "Gazellen und Antilopen," (op. cit. n. 35).

reserves," a practice that survived in reduced and ritualized form in the era of the first cities.[79]

A mix of these previously formulated theories appears in Faraj Basmachi's introduction to the posthumously published first volume of the catalogue of cylinder seals in the Iraq Museum. Basmachi writes first that the purpose of depicting animals beside a temple facade is a reference to the interdependence of livestock herders and the temple institution, then that the images refer to a specific ritual in which animals of a given species would stand for the deity to whom they were symbolically associated.[80] Basmachi uses the Arabic *māšiya* ("cattle," "livestock") as a catch-all, similar to Frankfort's "goats," while also acknowledging that the animals depicted include gazelles, deer, ibex, etc.

Implicit in most of these interpretive attempts are the assumptions that either the pairing of animals and facade or the very fact of the animals' representation itself must be evidence of the animals' domesticity. If these animals were significant to the temple *domus*, so the reasoning runs, they must have been valued resources over which that institutional household claimed ownership. Under this system of valuation, the ideal animal would be passive, docile, and readily exploited for valuable products, and the notion of "enclosure" projected onto the temple/herd designs would point to an aspiration towards totalized control over the movement and the life processes of livestock. But the notion that the temple/herd's figuration of belonging depends on enclosure and domestication conflicts with the visual analysis of the temple/herd scene above, where the mobile figures and non-familial bonds of the temple/herd are contrasted with the visions of domesticity evident in the byre motif. From the two seals found together in Sin Temple II, it is clear that the seal carvers of the Diyala

[79] Brentjes, "Gazellen und Antilopen," 542.

[80] Basmachi, Al-akhtām al-usṭuwāniyya / Cylinder Seals (op. cit. n. 39), 81.

temple/herds were familiar with the Uruk byre scene conventions, but that they rejected the very features of the byre motif that would have emphasized productivity or reproductivity, enclosure, and the subsumption of the animals' lives under the human-made *domus*'s protective control.

Gazelles, who are the most frequently attested type of animal in the temple/herd seal images, could well have been economically valuable to early Mesopotamian temples: it is well known that gazelles were hunted and captured for meat and hides during the third millennium BCE in Mesopotamia, as the Ur III-period (2112-2004 BCE) documents from Drehem (ancient Puzriš-Dagan) attest.[81] Deer and wild goats, who also appear in several of the temple/herd seals, are also attested among the captured wild animals in the Drehem tablets. The Early Dynastic lexical list of names and professions from Abū Ṣalābīkh includes mention of a "lu_2 [...] $šeg_9$ maš-da_3," a person who handled or hunted (?) wild goats and gazelles.[82] Collections of horn cores in domestic and workshop contexts at various Mesopotamian sites outside the Diyala have suggested some use in tool manufacture or as *materia magica*.[83] Gazelles may also have been tamed and coresident with humans like Gazelly. More recent historical sources indicate a long, if discontinuous, tradition of gazelle-

[81] See (among others) citations in Henri Limet, "Les animaux sauvages: chasse et divertissement en Mésopotamie," in *Exploitation des animaux sauvages à travers le temps*, ed. Jean Desse and Frédérique Audoin-Rouzeau (Éditions A.P.D.C.A., 1993), 365; M. Such-Gutiérrez, "Man and Animals in the Administrative Texts of the End of the 3rd Millennium BC," in *Animals and Their Relation to Gods, Humans and Things in the Ancient World*, ed. Raija Mattila et al. (Springer VS, 2019), 420 n. 26; Arbuckle et al., "Flattening the Wild," 254. For mentions of captive gazelles in early second-millennium documents, see also C. J. Gadd, "Tablets from Chagar Bazar and Tall Brak, 1937-38," *Iraq* 7 (1940): 32, 49, and 53; Emmanuelle Vila, "Les vestiges de chevilles osseuses de gazelles du secteur F de Tell Chuera (Syrie, Bronze ancien)," in *Proceedings of the Fifth International Symposium on the Archaeozoology of Southwestern Asia and Adjacent Areas*, ed. H. Buitenhuis et al. (ARCbv, 2002), 241-250.

[82] Robert D. Biggs, *Inscriptions from Tell Abū Ṣalābīkh* (The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 65, line 107; cf. the Ebla version of the same composition, published in Alfonso Archi, "La 'Lista di nomi e professioni' ad Ebla," *Studi Eblaiti* 4 (1981): 184, col. V, line 11.

[83] E.g., Karen Mudar, "Early Dynastic III Animal Utilization in Lagash: A Report on the Fauna of Tell Al-Hiba," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 41, no. 1 (1982): 28; P. R. S. Moorey, *Ancient Mesopotamian Materials and Industries: The Archaeological Evidence* (Eisenbrauns, 1994), 111-112; Vila, "Les vestiges de chevilles osseuses" (op. cit. n. 80).

rearing in captivity in Iraq, from experiments in captive antelope breeding near Basra under Caliph Hārūn al-Rašīd (recounted in the *Kitāb al-ḥayawān* of al-Jāḥiẓ)[84] through Rabbi Yosef Ḥayyim's comments on keeping gazelles in house courtyards in Baghdad in the nineteenth century CE.[85] But the nature of these animals' relationships to their human captors and the intentions behind their capture are varied and seldom reducible to utilitarian concerns, and in no instance did captive and/or tame gazelles become properly domesticated.[86]

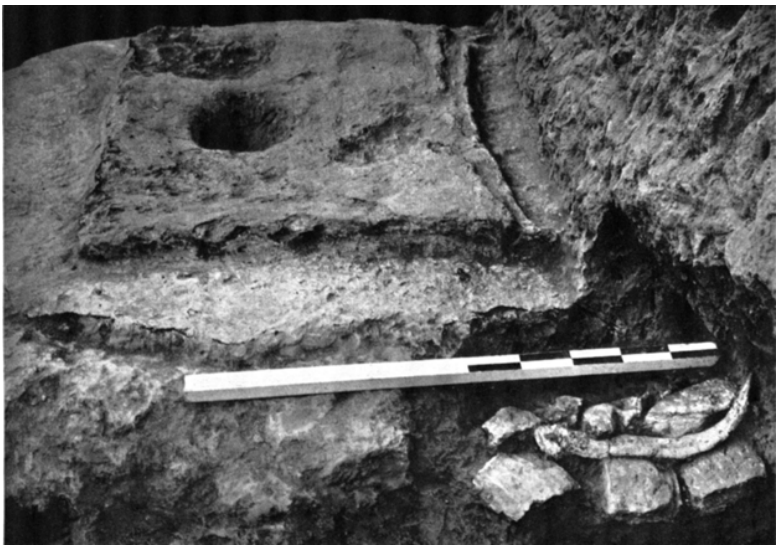


Figure 16. "Large horn laid on fragments of baked plano-convex bricks" below bitumen-lined ablution place in Nintu Temple IV, Tutub (Khafāja). After Delougaz and Lloyd, *Pre-Sargonid Temples*, 98, fig. 92. Courtesy of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures of the University of Chicago.

[84] Abī 'Uthmān 'Amr ibn Baḥr al-Jāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, ed. Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn (Mu'assasat al-A'lamī li'l-Maṭbū'āt, 2003), vol. 2, 274; see also Ahmed Aarab, Philippe Provençal, and Mohamed Idaomar, "Eco-Ethological Data According to Ǧāḥiẓ through His Work *Kitāb al- ḥayawān* (The Book of Animals)," *Arabica* 47, no. 2 (2000): 284.

[85] Zohar Amar and Ephraim Nissan, "Captive Gazelles in Iraqi Jewry in Modern Times in Relation to Cultural Practices and Vernacular Housing," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 8, no. 1 (2009): 27-28.

[86] On the obstacles to domestication of gazelles, see Juliet Clutton-Brock, *A Natural History of Domesticated Animals*, second edition (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 19-21; Melinda A. Zeder, "Pathways to Animal Domestication," in *Biodiversity in Agriculture: Domestication, Evolution, and Sustainability*, ed. Paul Gepts et al. (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 249-250; Such-Gutiérrez, "Man and Animals," 420 n. 26 (op. cit. n. 80).

The faunal remains from the Early Dynastic Diyala sites may tell a different story: not of "meat stores," but of highly selective, ritualized incorporation into temple structures. Deer and gazelle are present in the published faunal evidence from Khafāja, Tell Asmar, and Tell Agrab, mainly in the form of isolated antlers and horn cores in highly significant locations within temples.[87] In Nintu Temple IV at Khafāja, a single horn was "carefully laid on a foundation of a few broken burned bricks and fragments of stone" directly below the floor level on which a bitumen-lined basin and channel for libations were set (Figure 16).[88] A pair of gazelle horns was also included in a possible foundation deposit of the altar of Single Shrine III at Tell Asmar.[89] An additional horn is recorded as coming from a hoard in D17:8 of Square Temple I at the same site, where it was reportedly sealed over by the plaster layer of the Level II altar.[90] Finally, in a yet earlier phase of the same temple (Archaic Shrine III), "the well preserved end of an antler which had been sawn off" (Figure 17) is said to have come from the main sanctuary (D17:10), possibly in

[87] These deposits have a notable parallel in the "small pile of gazelle horns" in the antecella of the "Šamagan" temple at Nagar (Tell Brak): David Oates, Joan Oates, and Helen McDonald, *Excavations at Tell Brak, Vol. 1: Nagar in the Third Millennium BC* (British School of Archaeology in Iraq, 2001), 47. It is possible that gazelles had a specific association with the deity to whom this temple was dedicated: although the main evidence for the temple's original association with Šamagan has been shown to be a misreading of texts referring to equids, Šamagan was a deity of special significance in the Khabur region, and the "Scribe's Seal" from Tell Brak depicts an enthroned god extending one hand to a rampant caprine or gazelle (Oates et al, *Excavations at Tell Brak*, 144-149 and 387-388). The uncertainty surrounding the dedications of most of the Diyala temples, including the "Sin" and "Šara" temples, makes this sort of association difficult to trace.

[88] Delougaz and Lloyd, *Pre-Sargonid Temples*, 97-99, fig. 92.

[89] Max Hilzheimer, *Animal Remains from Tell Asmar* (The University of Chicago Press, 1941), 22-26. These specimens are mentioned by Delougaz and Lloyd (*Pre-Sargonid Temples*, 201-202) as "the well-preserved horns of a goat or small antelope still attached to the frontal bone." On the placement of these horns and their relation to the possible altar at this level, see also Judith Kingston Bjorkman, "Hoards and Deposits in Bronze Age Mesopotamia" (PhD diss., University of Pennsylvania 1994), 249.

[90] Delougaz and Lloyd, *Pre-Sargonid Temples*, 181-182. Note that the elevation given in the field register and object card (31.74 m.; accessed via DiyArDa, object no. As.33:458) would place it beneath the Square Temple floor recorded at 32.30 m., putting it instead within the range of the "Predecessor" building: cf. Evans, "Square Temple," 607-608. The horn is given excavation no. As.33:458.

association with the installation of a chase with jar for excess liquids from the altar described in the same paragraph of the report.[91]

Figure 17. Antler identified as *Dama dama* by Hilzheimer (*Animal Remains from Tell Asmar*, 21, fig. 6) from sanctuary D17:10, Archaic Shrine, Ešnuna (Tell Asmar), Iraq. Photo from the Diyala Archaeological Database, courtesy of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures of the University of Chicago.

The deposits of horn cores and antlers and those of the temple/herd seals themselves bear striking similarities to one another. There remains insufficient evidence to substantiate Frankfort's hypothesis that the temple/herd seals were substitutes for real animals (given as offerings or sacrifices), but we can observe that the seals and the animal parts were treated in similar ways. In both the Šara Temple altar caches and the horn and antler deposits at Khafāja and Tell Asmar, the

[91] Delougaz and Lloyd, *Pre-Sargonid Temples*, 165; the antler is given excavation no. As.34:53.

objects are embedded in the main altars and/or associated with the libation channels or receptacles adjacent to the altars. The placement of these objects near or directly under the libation installations also recalls the position of the gazelle on the Ur seal impressions discussed above (Figure 2), immediately beneath the libation-pourer in the procession toward the temple, although more evidence would be needed to draw a direct connection. It might nevertheless be rewarding to consider that the gazelle who grazes upon the plant and indirectly imbibes the libations on the Ur sealings models a form of social incorporation into the temple community, much like that which the incorporation of votives and animal parts into the Diyala temple structures would have effected in perpetuity. The Ur sealings' narrative of partition from the wild herd and reincorporation into the collective of worshipers hints at the actions of scission and reconsolidation by which temples manufactured their constituencies, whether by capture of living beings or by the collection and incorporation of votives and bodily fragments.

The partitive or virtual embedding of both animal bodies and votives in the temple structures would have forged ties of belonging that emphatically did not require the temple's enclosure or direct management of the human and animal collectives they thus metonymically or synecdochally incorporated. Indeed, these forms of incorporation may have functioned to remedy the limits on access to and real control by the temple during the earlier part of the Early Dynastic period.[92] As much recent scholarship on the political formations of early Mesopotamia has emphasized, the "presumptive" control that analogies

[92] On the limits to temples' real economic and political control in the ED I Diyala, see Susan Pollock, *Mesopotamia: The Eden That Never Was* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), 123-131. On the increasing restriction of access to temple spaces, see Diederik J. W. Meijer, "The Khafaje Sin Temple Sequence: Social Divisions at Work?" in *Of Pots and Plans: Papers in the Archaeology and History of Mesopotamia and Syria Presented to David Oates in Honour of His 75th Birthday*, ed. Lamia al-Gailani Werr (NABU, 2002), 218-226. See also Evans, *Lives of Sumerian Sculpture*, 97-107.

with modern states have granted the governing institutions of the third millennium BCE may obscure the full range of techniques for resolving the tensions that arose from the relations between those institutions and their mobile and semiautonomous constituencies. Anne Porter has argued that the symbolic and affective work of forging kinship bonds between disparate members of semi-mobile communities was of foundational importance to the development of temple households in the Diyala and northern Mesopotamia.[93] Similarly, following Seth Richardson's model of early Mesopotamian states as "low-power" polities, Kathryn Grossman and Tate Paulette have highlighted the importance of caprines in making aspirational and strategically ambiguous claims of dominion.[94] The ambiguous *belonging* that ties the herds to the temples in the seal designs might therefore be all the more efficacious for its ambiguity: rather than affirming the power that the temple *domus* had over herds of livestock that formed its chattel, the temple/herd images allow the temple to refigure itself as a mobile and animate collective.

In Mesopotamian literary texts, temples often appear not as agents of enforced stasis and enclosure, but as restless, mobile, animal beings.[95] Sometimes they are the inhabitants of expansive, open landscapes, and sometimes they are the landscapes themselves. In the compendium of Sumerian *Temple Hymns*, for instance, the Keš temple prowls about the plains (eden) like a lion.[96] An early description of a temple decomposed into animalized parts comes from the Early Dynastic *Keš Temple Hymn*: "temple, a bison at the top, a stag at the bottom, / temple, a wild ram at

[93] Anne Porter, *Mobile Pastoralism and the Formation of Near Eastern Civilization: Weaving Together Society* (Cambridge University Press, 2012); on the Sin Temple, see especially pp. 158-163.

[94] Grossman and Paulette, "Wealth-on-the-Hoof and the Low-Power State"; Richardson, "Early Mesopotamia: The Presumptive State"; idem, "Before Things Worked." (All op. cit. n. 9.)

[95] Cf. Beate Pongratz-Leisten, "The Animated Temple and Its Agency in the Urban Life of the City in Ancient Mesopotamia," *Religions* 12, no. 638 (2021): 1-11.

[96] Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature (ETCSL) 4.80.1, line 91: ug gal [...] eden-na dag-ga. See also Pongratz-Leisten, "Animated Temple," 4-5.

the top, a deer at the bottom" (e_2 an-$še_3$ alim / ki- $še_3$ lulim / e_2 an-$še_3$ $šeg_9$-bar ki-$še_3$ $dara_3$-maš).[97] The choice of animals is notable, as these are ungulates associated with the plains and highlands: their embodiment of the temple's extremities, above and below, may help to undermine the stasis and enclosure of the structure, replacing it with a more expansive image of the temple as a likeness of the unbounded landscapes through which such animals might move. In the later, more completely preserved manuscripts of the *Keš Temple Hymn*, the temple is a gathering place for the deer and divinities who normally occupy the plains,[98] while also itself becoming animal and inhabiting the open country with them: it is alternately (or perhaps simultaneously) a mountain, a hillside, the offspring of a lion, and a bull standing in the eden.[99]

That these open spaces belonged (in some sense) to the divine, without being subjected to a domesticating human domination, in Early Dynastic Mesopotamian thought is clear from texts such as that of the *Figure aux Plumes* plaque from Ĝirsu.[100] On this rare inscribed monument of the ED I we find, as part of what Claus Wilcke has interpreted as a hymn to Ninĝirsu, a description of the plains where bison and gazelles are born ($ša_3$-tum_2 alim$^?$ maš-da_3 tu), apparently naming these as part of the god's purview.[101] The same notion is echoed several times in later

[97] Robert D. Biggs, "An Archaic Sumerian Version of the Kesh Temple Hymn from Tell Abū Ṣalābīkh," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 61, no. 2 (1971): 201, lines 47-48. The temple is also likened to a "fierce ox" in the same composition: lines 13-14. In a single Old Babylonian copy of the *Keš Temple Hymn* (BM 115798), the likeness to these animals is specified as coloration (e.g., $dara_3$-maš-gin_7 gun_3-a), but this is an exceptional variant: see M. J. Geller, "Jacobsen's '*Harps*' and the Keš Temple Hymn," *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie* 86 (1996): 70 and 73, line 49.

[98] ETCSL 4.80.2, lines 82-83; see also Jeremy Black, Graham Cunningham, Eleanor Robson, and Gábor Zólyomi, *The Literature of Ancient Sumer* (Oxford University Press, 2004), 327-328.

[99] ETCSL 4.80.2, lines 8, 16, 58I, 75, and 89; Black et al., *Literature*, 327.

[100] Musée du Louvre, AO 221; CDLI no. P220632.

[101] Claus Wilcke, "Die Inschrift der 'Figure aux plumes' – ein frühes Werk sumerischer Dichtkunst," in *Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte Vorderasiens: Festschrift für Rainer Michael Boehmer*, ed. U. Finkbeiner et al. (Philipp von Zabern, 1995), 669-674; Camille Lecompte, "À propos de deux monuments figurés du début du 3^e millénaire: observations sur la *Figure aux Plumes* et la *Prisoner Plaque*," in *The Third Millennium: Studies in Early Mesopotamia and Syria in Honor of Walter*

compositions, such as *Enki and the World Order*, which includes a passage describing the god's gaze reaching to the places where bison, stags, wild goats, and ibex are born, places where no human has ever visited (lu$_2$ nu-ku$_4$-ku$_4$-da).[102] Later in the same text, Enki delegates divine oversight of the plain (eden), together with its animals, to the god Šakkan.[103] In the *Keš Temple Hymn*, the god Urimaš, called the "great herald of the plain," plays a similar role as guardian of the open country.[104] One mythic text known from Early Dynastic copies at Abū Ṣalābīkh may also prefigure Enki's investiture of Šakkan, as a divine child of An and Ezinan here takes (or is granted) control over animals of the plains and the highlands.[105] The goddess Ninhursaĝ, the "lady of the foothills," probably acted as guardian of wild animals during the Early Dynastic period, as the prominence of the stags on the lintel from her temple at Tell al-'Ubaid suggests.[106] An incised stone plaque from the temple of Ninhursaĝ at Mari (Tell Ḥarīrī, Syria), probably dating to the beginning of the third millennium BCE, may depict that goddess or a local deity identified with her in an abstracted and

Sommerfeld and Manfred Krebernik, ed. Ilya Arkhipov et al. (Brill, 2020), 418 and 420-421. The translation of alim as "bison" is in accord with the visual evidence for the presence of Eurasian bison/wisents (*Bison bonasus*) in western Iran at least until the beginning of the second millennium BCE: see R. M. Boehmer, "Früheste Darstellung des orientalischen Wisents," *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 9 (1978): 18-21 and Taf. 3-6.

[102] ETCSL 1.1.3, line 16; Black et al., *Literature*, 216 and 222-223.

[103] On Šakkan/Šamagan/Sumuqan, see Antoine Cavigneaux, "A Scholar's Library in Meturan? With an Edition of the Tablet H 72 (Textes de Tell Haddad VII)," in *Mesopotamian Magic: Textual, Historical, and Interpretive Perspectives*, edited by Tzvi Abusch and Karel van der Toorn (Brill, 2000), 261-264; F. A. M. Wiggermann, "Sumuqan," in *Reallexikon für Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, vol. 13 (2013), 308-309.

[104] ETCSL 4.80.2, lines 82-83; Black et al., *Literature*, 327-328. See also Gebhard Selz, "Reflections on the Pivotal role of Animals in Early Mesopotamia," in *Animals and Their Relation to Gods, Humans and Things in the Ancient World*, ed. Raija Mattila et al. (Springer VS, 2019), 43-44.

[105] Manfred Krebernik and Jan J. W. Lisman, "Ezinan's Seven Children: An Early Dynastic Sumerian Myth from Abū Ṣalābīḫ," *Altorientalische Forschungen* 51, no. 2 (2024): 170-220.

[106] Thorkild Jacobsen, "Notes on Nintur," *Orientalia* Nova Series 42 (1973): 281-286; Gebhard J. Selz, "Das Paradies der Mütter. Materialien zum ursprung der "Paradiesvorstellungen," *WZKM* 100 (2010): 177-217; Julia M. Asher-Greve and Joan Goodnick Westenholz, *Goddesses in Context: On Divine Powers, Roles, Relationships and Gender in Mesopotamian Textual and Visual Sources* (Academic Press Fribourg / Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Göttingen, 2013), 58-59 and 137-141.

visually ambiguous manner, transforming the divine body itself into a sort of "plain" on which cervid or caprine animals congregate.[107]

The wide-ranging imagery of open land and roaming animals that pervades the literary references to the gods' dwellings demands equal attention to the imagery of the "cattlepen and sheepfold" so well known and often cited in the secondary literature on early Mesopotamia.[108] The god's house is necessarily both a walled enclosure and a rolling hill, a byre and a broad plain. In the temple/herd seals, we may be looking at artistic efforts to render this duality visible: not to subordinate one aspect to the other, nor to establish them as structural opposites, but to convey the temple's simultaneous existence as a disparate community, as a unitary building, and as a manifestation of a divine presence that could reach even to those far expanses that human feet had never trod—and which the domesticating control of humans could hardly hope (if indeed it hoped at all) to touch.

The alternation between the enclosed and self-enclosing facade and the freely disposed herd of animals in the temple/herd seals invites a reading of the two entities as mirrors, or as obverse and reverse of a single image. The actual conditions of visibility of the seals, if they were in fact not habitually rolled out to create a unified image-band, might have invited an oscillating and partial viewing experience, with the facade and the herd alternately supplanting one another as the seal was rotated. Each one typically occupies about half of the surface of the cylinder, perhaps suggesting dual and equal aspects of the temple itself, which is both a

[107] Piotr Steinkeller, "Texts, Art and Archaeology: An Archaic Plaque from Mari and the Sumerian Birth-Goddess Ninhursag," in *De l'argile au numérique: mélanges assyriologiques en l'honneur de Dominique Charpin*, ed. Grégory Chambon et al. (Peeters, 2019), 977-1011; Asher-Greve and Westenholz, *Goddesses in Context*, 138-139.

[108] Ömür Harmanşah, "The Cattlepen and the Sheepfold: Cities, Temples, and Pastoral Power in Ancient Mesopotamia," in *Heaven on Earth: Temples, Ritual, and Cosmic Symbolism in the Ancient World*, ed. Deena Ragavan (The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, 2012), 373-394.

static, physical structure and a wide-reaching, diffuse set of bonds and claims of belonging that reaches far across the open plains. The animals' unconstrained mobility in these open spaces—not the restraint which might be imposed by the status of domestic livestock—is precisely what makes them valuable in this model, for they extend the temple beyond itself. Rotating the temple/herd seal, we pass from the straight-sided enclosure into parts unknown, outside human ownership but not necessarily outside the temple's expansive purview or its imagined constituency.

Conclusion

The reinterpretation of the temple/herd motif above suggests a broader shift in our view of the Mesopotamian temple's orientation toward the animal world and the wild spaces surrounding early urban settlements. Rather than adopting an ecological imperialist model of the wild as needing taming in order to be made a resource for the agrarian state's surplus production, we may need to think of nonhuman animals' value as being, in many cases, dependent on the very qualities of resistance to domesticity and enclosure that made them difficult to exploit as resources for generating surplus. I have suggested ways in which the temple/herds' gazelles, deer, ibex, and other animals might have become significant not on the basis of their economic value as chattel, but through their modeling of more diverse and diffusive modes of belonging and their mobility across the domestic sphere and its wild exterior. In this way, the partition and incorporation of both animal remains and of seals themselves could have forged bonds connecting the temple's physical structure and core community to dispersed and mobile constituencies, both human and nonhuman.

This should prompt a reconsideration of how the notion of "domestication" functions in the interpretation of early Mesopotamian artworks, for if we try to define the *domus* of the early Mesopotamian temple, we may find it continually slipping away into the spaces and beings that ought to be constitutively excluded from the domestic sphere. If we read the temple's aspirations not as the enclosure and taming of a wild Other, but as a self-projection and extension into the "wild," then we must pay closer attention to the work of animal figuration in these institutions' self-definition. The herds of animals who run past like clouds of drill holes or undulating waves may thus help to keep the temple in motion, ever expanding into new terrain without the strictures that would limit belonging to a certain model of property. Far from merely filling up the temple's stock or filling out its flocks, they expand its social horizons. In the interest of enlarging an imagined community, they compel the imagination to run wild.