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A NOTE ON THE FRIEZE OF THE STAG RHYTON IN THE SCHIMMEL COLLECTION

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The frieze on the silver stag rhyton in the Norbert Schimmel Collection, New York, has been described and discussed several times (1). Here I only want to discuss the composition of the frieze, i.e., the question of where it begins and ends. The importance of determining the proper beginning and end of a composition running around a cylindrical surface is well known to anyone who ever looked at cylinder seals. In the case of the stag rhyton I have long been wondering why the first presentation of the entire frieze in Muscarella's catalogue was cut the way it was, and why this arrangement was retained in all subsequent publications. In the case of the photographic reproductions the reason may simply have been the availability of certain photographs and no others. But also the drawings known to me, published by Alp and Boehmer, reproduce the original arrangement (2). It seems to me that the correct limits of the scene can be determined on the basis of cult scenes engraved on Hittite stamp seals which, indeed, have been compared with the rhyton by several scholars (3); but their bearing on determining the limits of the frieze has so far only been hinted at in note 15 of my article just cited but not fully discussed. It therefore seems useful here explicitly to state how I think the frieze should be cut, and to demonstrate it visually. I hope our colleague and friend Ekrem Akurgal, who has contributed so much to the understanding of Hittite art, will find this kind of formal analysis worth while.

In the illustration I present together the following items (seals are shown in the direction of the impression):

- (1) The frieze of the stag rhyton (after Boehmer, see n.2), (a) in the traditional, (b) in my new arrangement (reduced in size);
- (2) the hammer seal in the British Museum (4);
- (3) the disk-shaped seal in Dresden (5);
- (4) the disk-shaped seal in a private collection in Adana (6).

The three seals (7) share one cult scene: the worship of a seated deity holding a bird. In the London seal (2) this is one of two scenes; the Dresden seal (3) adds a third scene to these two, while the Adana piece has the first only. If the seals are held so that the hieroglyphs in the center field are in the proper direction (8), (2) shows the worship of the winged sun on top, in (3) the border between the first two scenes occupies the apex, and in (4), where one scene fills the whole ring, the deity and the stag head are on top.

Turning now to the scene that is of interest for the frieze on the rhyton, its central figure is the seated deity holding a bird and facing a Hittite altar. Approaching the altar from the right on (2) and (3) are a man with a bird head or mask pouring a libation and a man in a trailing robe, possibly a king. On the Adana seal (4) there are four persons; one of them, in **knielauf**, carries a pitcher, another one carries an unclear object. In addition, a tall pithos is standing between the god and the altar. Dinçol already compared these figures with those on the rhyton. In particular, the kneeling third person with the pitcher corresponds to the third man in the frieze whom Alp has identified with the **paršnawas SAGI** of the texts (9).

More important are the elements shown behind the god: the head of a stag over two horizontal objects. I think that Dinçol found the right explanation for these: two severed lower legs of the animal. That they are not simply horizontal lines or sticks is clear in (3) and (4). Next on the London seal (2) comes a bag with handle, very close in shape to that on the rhyton. In (3) there is a break where the handle is expected; the ends of the object, on a photograph, do not show the pointed ends indicated in the drawing. Thus I do not hesitate restoring the same bag here. What follows in (2) but precedes the "bag" in (3) must be the quiver. R. Alexander took it for the ligature **ha+li** (L197), the writing of the name Hattusili, and used this for dating the seal to the thirteenth century (10), but Alp is certainly right in taking it as quiver (11). In both (2) and (3) there follow two upright spears and a tree. The tree forms the border between this scene and the next on both these seals. Seal (4) differs in that it omits the quiver and the spears; the bag looks closer to the shape on (2) in the photograph of 8 B than in the drawing. Under it, the triangle of (2) and (3) is replaced on (4) by a disk. I consider both elements as symbols used as "fillers." Finally, since there is only one single scene on (4), the tree marks its beginning and end.

I also agree with Dinçol in taking the items just described as pictorial elements, not as hieroglyphs. Alp's idea that the object that looks like a bag with handle could be the **kursa-** of the texts is quite attractive. Going

through the **kursa-** file of the Chicago Hittite Dictionary I found that the evidence agrees well with this proposal. The KUŠ **kursas** apparently is a bag made out of an animal hide, but there are also bags made of other materials (12). I think that the design on the seals and the rhyton depicts this leather bag. Similarly I take the quiver for a picture of that object, with ends of arrows sticking out and probably with a simplified rendering of the shoulder strap shown on the rhyton.

Returning now to the frieze on the stag rhyton, it seems to me that the parallels with the seals are cogent. The spears, quiver, bag, and dead stag belong behind the deity here and there; variations in their sequence do not matter. And the tree marks the beginning and end of the composition. Actually, since part of the tree is entwined with the dead stag and its severed (!) legs, the exact border would be either the center of the tree or the narrow empty space to the left of it. Finally, the handle of the rhyton runs exactly over the tree, as can be seen from the relevant photographs. This feature, too, shows clearly where one should begin "reading" the relief (13).

The concept of depositing the catch with a god as sacrifice after successful hunt is not alien to Hittite art. A stamp-cylinder in the Louvre (14) shows in its lower register a hunting scene, complete with a flock of deer, the hunter with his coachman on one chariot and game drivers on other chariots. In an adjacent scene four dead animals are spread out in front of a god on a lion (15). I shall not discuss the identity of the various deities depicted on the rhyton and on the seals, since this would go far beyond the scope of this note. I would only like to add that the emphasis on stag offerings seen in these representations reminds me of the "deer festival" mentioned in some texts (16).

FOOTNOTES

- (1) O.W. Muscarella, *Ancient Art: The Norbert Schimmel Collection* (Mainz, Philipp von Zabern, 1974) no. 123; K. Bittel, *Beitrag zur Kenntnis hethitischer Bildkunst (Sitzungsber. Heidelberg, Phil.-hist. Kl. 1976, 4)*; S. Alp, *Beiträge zur Erforschung des hethitischen Tempels* (TTK Yay. VI, 23, 1983) pp. 93-100.
- (2) Alp, op.cit. fig. 6 h (drawing by Neriman Tezcan); R.M. Boehmer, *Die Reliefkeramik von Boğazköy (Boğazköy-Hattuša XIII, 1983) p.59, fig. 49* (drawing by C.Koken).
- (3) H.G. Güterbock, *Journal of The Walters Art Gallery* 36 (1977) 9; Alp, op.cit. 99 f.; A.M. Dinçol, *Anadolu Araştırmaları* 9 (1983) 185f. and 221f., note 3.
- (4) BM 115655, formerly 17805; here after L. Messerschmidt, *OLZ* 3 (1900) 441-2, fig. 3 = *CIH* pl. XLIII, 3; here intentionally inverted to emphasize the relevant part. Other publications: E.A.W. Budge, *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology* 9 (1887) 27 (enlarged photograph of impression, still the best); D.G. Hogarth, *Hittite Seals* (1920) p. 75, fig. 78; R.L. Alexander, *Anatolica* 5 (1976) pl. III fig. 6; S. Alp, op.cit. fig. 12a, b.
- (5) No. ZV 1769: Messerschmidt, *OLZ* 1900, 441-2, fig. 1 = *CIH* XLIII 4; E. Unger, apud H. Th. Bossert, *Geschichte des Kunstgewerbes* 3, p. 421, 9; idem, *Janus und der Mann mit der Adler-oder Greifenmaske* (Istanbul, 1959) pl. 3, fig. 8, reproduced here, again turned to show relevant part; Alp, *Beleten XXXI/124* (1967) 513ff. fig 2; idem, *Beitr.* fig. 11.
- (6) A.M. Dinçol, *Anadolu Araştırmaları* 9 (1983) 183-87 and 220-22, no. 8.
- (7) I leave out the silver seal in the Louvre, L. Delaporte, *Catalogue II, A 1037*, Messerschmidt, *OLZ* 1900 fig. 2, *PKG* 14, Pl. 376e, because I am convinced that it is a fake; cf. Messerschmidt, l.c. 445f.
- (8) Here intentionally turned around, cf. notes 4 and 5 above.
- (9) I had privately and orally expressed the same.
- (10) *Anatolica* 5, 172.
- (11) The same was independently suggested to me by R.M. Boehmer.
- (12) I refrain from giving details here because I hope that Professor Alp will himself publish his reasons, and because the material has been well presented by M. Popko, in *AoF* 2 (1975) 65-70 and in his *Kultobjekte in der hethitischen Religion* (Univ. Warszawa, 1978), 108-115.
- (13) K. Bittel, op.cit. (n. 1 above) p. 14, while describing the spears, bag, etc. as "following behind the seated figure," leaves it open whether they belong here or to the other end.
- (14) AO 20138, A. Parrot, *Syria* 28 (1951) 180-190; Alexander, *Anatolica* 5, pp. 154f., pl. II fig. 3c; enlarged photograph in M. Riemschneider, *Die Welt der Hethiter*, pl. 97.
- (15) Also related to this concept is the fact that at Höyük the hunting reliefs originally sat on top of the cult scene; see Güterbock, *Anatolian Studies* 6 (1956) 54-56; M. Mellink, *Anadolu* 14 (1970) (72) 15 f.
- (16) Thus, EZEN AYALI; despite HW² 48, with H. Otten, *ZA* 66, 93, and H.A. Hoffner, *BIOR* 35, 245.

