

## Bows Used as Symbols of Military Victory in the Neo-Assyrian Period

### *Yeni Asur Döneminde Askeri Zafer Sembolü Olarak Kullanılan Yaylar*

#### *Araştırma Makalesi – Research Article*

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#### **Abstract**

Bows have been used by humankind since prehistoric times. Initially used by hunters to meet their food needs, simple bows with a wooden body and a beam made of plant fiber or animal skin evolved over time into the indispensable deadly compound bow of the battlefields made with sinew, horn, and adhesive. However, since the bows were made of organic materials such as wood, leather, plant fiber, sinew, and horn, most of them decayed over time and were lost in nature. Thus, very few bows survived intact. Hence, visual works and cuneiform texts depicted on steles, obelisks, reliefs, seals, and door bands constitute our main source of information on bows.

Numerous archaeological and epigraphic materials on bows dated to the Neo-Assyrian Period (1000-612 BC) have been unearthed as a result of scientific studies. Studies on these materials give important information on the use of bows in many different areas such as hunting activities, battlefields, religious ceremonies, and curse texts but also show that they were used as a symbol of kings' military victories.

**Key Words:** Bow, Arrow, Symbol, Neo-Assyria, Hunting, War, Victory, Tribute, Booty

#### **Öz**

Yaylar tarih öncesi dönemlerden itibaren insanoğlu tarafından kullanılmaya başlanmıştır. İlk başlarda gıda ihtiyacını karşılamak için avcılar tarafından kullanılan, ahşap bir gövde ve bitki lifi veya hayvan derisinden yapılmış kirişe sahip basit yaylar zamanla, sinir, boynuz, tutkal kullanılarak savaş alanlarının vazgeçilmez ölümcül bileşik yayına dönüşmüştür. Ancak yaylar ahşap, deri, bitki lifi, sinir boynuz gibi organik malzemeden yapıldığı için yayların çoğu, zamanla çürüyerek doğada kaybolmuş çok az sayıda yay günümüze bir bütün halinde ulaşmıştır. Bu nedenle yaylarla ilgili ana bilgi kaynağımızı stel, obelisk, rölyef, mühür ve kapı bandları üzerine betimlenen görsel eserler ve çivi yazılı metinler oluşturmaktadır.

Yeni Asur Dönemine (MÖ 1000-612) tarihlendirilen yaylarla ilgili çok sayıda arkeolojik ve epigrafik malzeme bilimsel çalışmalar sonucunda gün yüzüne çıkarılmıştır. Bu malzemeler üzerinde yapılan çalışmalar, yayların avcılık faaliyetleri, savaş meydanları, dini törenler ve beddua metinleri gibi çok farklı alanda kullanıldığını dair önemli bilgiler vermesinin yanı sıra, kralların askeri zaferlerinin bir sembolü olarak da kullanıldığını göstermektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Yay, Ok, Sembol, Yeni Asur, Avcılık, Savaş, Zafer, Haraç, Ganimet

#### **Introduction**

In the Dictionary of the Turkish Language Association, a bow is defined as a curved wood or metal rod that has a beam stretched between its two ends for shooting arrows. In cuneiform texts, the bow is expressed as “<sup>GIŠ</sup>PAN” in Sumerian and “qaštu” in Akkadian. The bow consists of two basic materials, a wooden body and a beam made of leather/rope. With some additions made to these two basic materials over time, the bows turned into war tools that are more flexible than their original form and can shoot effectively at longer distances. This war tool is divided into sections within itself. Although these sections are called different names in different societies, in general, the surface of the wood furthest from the beam is named the back, the inner surface is named the belly, and the part point where the bow is held by the archer is named the grip. The parts on either side of the grip are called the limb. A beam is placed inside the notches at the ends of these limbs<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Wilkinson, 1991:83; Zutterman, 2003:158; Burke, 2008:34

As the bows were made of organic materials such as wood and leather, as mentioned above, they decayed over time and were lost to humankind. Therefore, very few bows survived to the present day intact. For this reason, most of the information on bows comes from visual works on materials such as rock paintings, seals, seal impressions, ivory artifacts, door bands, wall reliefs, and obelisks. These visual artifacts have been found in different parts of the world. For instance, different types of bows can be seen on rock paintings dating to the Paleolithic period in the Levante region of Spain (Photo 1)<sup>2</sup>.



Photo 1: Different Types of Bows on Rock Paintings Dated to the Paleolithic Period (Guilaine and Zammit, 2005:66)

Within the borders of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, many visual materials depicting bows were unearthed. The first of these images is seen on the potsherds found in Tell Sabi Abyad' (right) located within the borders of Syria and dated to 6000 BC and in Arpachiyah (left) located within the borders of present-day Iraq and dated to 4200 BC (Photo 2). These bows should most likely be simple bows<sup>3</sup>.



Photo 2: Bows Depicted on Arpachiyah and Tell Sabi Abyad Potteries (Akkermans and Schwartz, 2003:132; Akkermans and Schwartz, 2003:132; Hamblin, 2006:89)

Our second example can be seen on a basalt stele in Uruk, dating to 3300 BC and depicting lion hunting (Photo 3)<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>2</sup>Guilaine and Zammit, 2005:66

<sup>3</sup>Collon,1983: 54-55; Akkermans and Schwartz, 2003:132

<sup>4</sup>Yadin1963:118; Öz,2016:145



Photo 3: Stele Depicting a Lion Hunt (Yadin, 1963:118)

On this stele, the King, who is seen face to face with the lion, is depicted shooting an arrow at the lion at close range with his bow. A careful examination of the bow used by the King reveals that the bow is curved upwards and is a nearly semicircular weapon with a single bow. The average length of such bows varies between 1.5 and 1.7 meters<sup>5</sup>.

Our third example is seen on a cylinder seal dated to the Late Uruk period. On this seal, there is a king/administrator wearing a net-shaped skirt and a person behind him giving him the arrows. This king/administrator is depicted shooting at four wild bulls with a double convex bow in his hand (Photo 4)<sup>6</sup>.

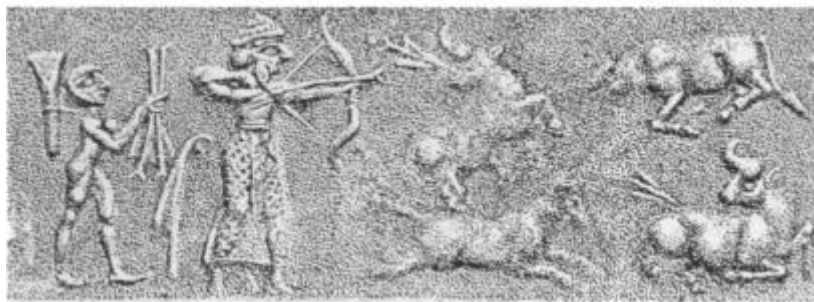


Photo 4: Bow Depicted on the Cylinder Seal from the Late Uruk Period (Aruz, 2003:23)

Used by humankind for hunting to meet their basic food needs at first, simple bows had a beam made of a single piece of wood and animal skin/plant fiber. These simple bows improved over time in terms of durability, flexibility, and range with the use of materials such as sinews, horns, and adhesive. The impact and range of these bows improved with double convex bows and peaked with compound bows. These compound bows turned into powerful weapons of war with the help of sinews, horns, adhesive, and wood. Certain procedures were done to increase the strength and flexibility of the bows, which were indispensable on the battlefields. In the first procedure, the sinews taken from the animals were

<sup>5</sup>Aruz,2003:158; Burke, 2008:33; Yadin, 1963:47

<sup>6</sup>Aruz,2003:23

dried and processed, and late glued to the outer part of the wood. In the second one, the molds made from animal horns were glued to the inner part with an adhesive. As a result of these procedures, a flexible, durable, and composite bow made of four main materials, namely wood, animal sinew, horn, and adhesive, came to life<sup>7</sup>.

The first examples of composite bows within the borders of the Neo-Assyrian Empire are seen on stelae dated to the Akkadian period. The first of these stelae is the Victory Stele in Iran (Susa), which depicts Naram-Sin, the grandson of Akkadian King Sargon, climbing the Zagros Mountain and defeating the mountain people of Lullubi. On the stele dated to 2200 BC, Naram-Sin is shown holding an arrow in his right hand while holding the grip of the bow at chest level with his left hand, as a symbol of his military victory. However, since these bows used about 4000 years ago have not been unearthed intact, it is very difficult to say anything about their structural features but based on visual artifacts, scientists argue that such bows can be compound bows. Scientists claiming these bows to be composite give as evidence the distance between the ends of the bowstring being around 90 cm and that the ends being inclined towards the opposite side<sup>8</sup>.

Traces of the presence of compound bows are not only seen on visual artifacts. For instance, important information on the existence of compound bows is seen in the Epic of Aqhat dated to the Late Bronze Age<sup>9</sup>:

Listen to me, I beg of you (O Generous Aqhat), Ask for Silver, be it yours (and) Gold, be it your gift, But give your bow (to Anath), Let the Progenitress of the Peoples take your arrows. But Aqhat the Generous replied: I have vowed yews of Lebanon, I have vowed tendons from wild bulls, I have vowed horns from wild goats, sinews from hocks of bulls, I have vowed cradles from suckling lambs, Give them to Kothar and Khasis, That they may make a bow for thee, and arrows for the Progenitress of the Peoples. And the Virgin Anath replied: Wish life, O Aqhat the Hero, Wish life and be it yours, Immortality be it my gift to you.<sup>10</sup>

## 1. Neo-Assyrian Period (1000 BC-612 BC)

The time spanning the years 1000-612 BC is coined the Neo-Assyrian Period in history. In this period, the Assyrians expanded their fields of activity to Çukurova and the Taurus Mountains, which are located in Anatolia, to western Iran, Syria, and Eastern Mediterranean. Dominating these regions for about 400 years, the Neo-Assyrian Empire was ruled by Ashur-dan II (934-912 BC), Adad-nirari II (911-891 BC), Tukulti-Ninurta II (890-884 BC), Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BC), Shalmaneser III (858-824 BC), Shamshi-Adad V (823-811), Adad-nirari III (810-783 BC), Shalmaneser IV (782-773 BC), Ashur-dan III (772-755 BC), Ashur-nirari V (754-745 BC), Tiglath-Pileser III (744-727 BC), Shalmaneser V (726-722 BC), Sargon II (721-705 BC), Sennacherib (704-681 BC), Esarhaddon (680-669 BC), Ashurbanipal (668-627 BC), Ashur-etil-ilani (630?-623? BC), Sinsharishkun (622? -612 BC), and Ashur-uballit II (611-609 BC), respectively<sup>11</sup>.

### 1.1. Bows in Cuneiform Sources

Information on bows in cuneiform texts in the Neo-Assyrian Period appears in texts from the eras of Adad-nirari II (911-891 BC), Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BC), Ashur-nirari V (754-745 BC), Sennacherib (704-681 BC), Esarhaddon (680-669 BC), and Ashurbanipal (668-627 BC). Although there are no definite statements stating that bows were used as symbols of victory in these texts, there is important information on gods Ashur and Adad, goddesses Ishtar and Astarte giving their bows to the kings and contributing to the defeat of the enemy. In addition, there is information in these texts that the enemy troops fighting against the Assyrian Empire, relying on their own bows, declared war

<sup>7</sup>Gonen, 1976:57-59; Gabriel, 2007: 72; Göksu, 2018: 56

<sup>8</sup>Gabriel, 2007: 67; Yücel, 1999:246; Aruz, 2003:196

<sup>9</sup>Albright ve Mendenhall, 1942: 228-29; Gibson, 2004:108-109

<sup>10</sup>Albright ve Mendenhall, 1942: 228-29; Gibson, 2004:108-109

<sup>11</sup>Kuhr, 2013:132; Sevin, 2014:13; Köroğlu, 2008:4

against the Assyrian Empire<sup>12</sup>. The information on the bows in the cuneiform texts of the Neo-Assyrian Period is as follows:

### a) The Reign of Adad-Nirari II (911-891 BC)

In the eponymy of Likberu I marched a fourth time to the land Hanigalbat. At that time Muquru, the Temannu, broke the oath of the great gods and belligerently sought against me war and battle. Trusting in his fortified city, his strong bow, his extensive troops, and the Aramaeans, he rebelled against me.<sup>13</sup>

### b) The Reign of Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BC)

I entered the city of Apqu. I set off from Apqu. I killed with my fierce bow five before the city of Malhina in the land of Hatti.<sup>14</sup>

### c) The Reign of Ashur-Nirari V (754-745 BC)

If Mati'-ilu sins against this treaty with Ashur-nirari, King of Assyria, may Mati'-ilu become a prostitute, his soldiers women, may they receive [a gift] in the squares of their city like any prostitute, may one country push them to the next; may Mati'-ilu's (sex) life be that of a mule, his wives extremely old; may Ishtar, the goddess of men, the lady of women, take way their bow, bring them to shame, and make them weep bitterly.<sup>15</sup>

### d) The Reign Sennacherib (704-681 BC)

I hurriedly mounted in the anger of my heart. The mighty bow which Assur had given me, I seized in my hands.<sup>16</sup>

The god Aššur, my lord, encouraged me and I ordered the march against them, to the land Nagītu. I settled in Nineveh the people of the land Hatti plundered by my [bow(s)] and they skillfully built magnificent ships, a product characteristic of their land. I gave orders to sailors of the cities Tyre (and) Sidon, (and) the land Ionia, whom I had captured. They (my troops) let (the sailors) sail down the Tigris River with them downstream to the city Opis.<sup>17</sup>

I raged up [like a] ferocious [...], and (then) [put on armor] (and) placed [a helmet suitable for] combat on my head. [In] my anger, I rode quickly [in my exalted battle chariot, which lays enemies low]. I took in my hand [the mighty bow that the god Aššur had granted to me] (and) I grasped in my hand [an arrow that cuts off life].<sup>18</sup>

[Through] the craft of the deity Ninagal [and] my own expertise, I had a gate of reddish bronze made that is entirely (one single) metal band. According to the command that the gods Šamaš and Adad gave me through divination, I depicted on this gate an image of the god Aššur, who is going to fight [Tiāmat], (showing) the bow as he carries (it)."<sup>19</sup>

### e) The Reign of Esarhaddon (680-669 BC)

The goddess Ištar, the lady of war and battle, who loves my priestly duties, stood at my side, broke their bows,<sup>20</sup>

The goddess Ištar, the lady of battle and war, gave me a mighty bow (and) a fierce arrow as a present.<sup>21</sup>

I settled in it people plundered by my bow from the eastern mountains and sea (and) I placed my officer as governor over them.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Breasted, 1924:44; Parpola and Watanabe, 1988:27; Leichty, 2011:15

<sup>13</sup>Grayson, 2002:150

<sup>14</sup>Grayson, 2002:258

<sup>15</sup>Parpola and Watanabe, 1988:12

<sup>16</sup>Breasted, 1924:44

<sup>17</sup>Grayson and Novotny, 2014:82

<sup>18</sup>Grayson and Novotny, 2014:195

<sup>19</sup>Grayson and Novotny, 2014:224

<sup>20</sup>Leichty, 2011:13

<sup>21</sup>Leichty, 2011:15

May Ištar lady of warfare, break his bow in the thick of battle and have him crouch as a captive (under his enemy)<sup>23</sup>

May Astarte break your bow in the thick of battle and have you crouch at the feet of your enemy, may a foreign enemy divide your belongings.<sup>24</sup>

May Ištar lady of battle and war smash your in the thick of battle, may she bind your arms, and have you crouch under your enemy.<sup>25</sup>

(Ditto) may all the gods who are called by name in this treaty tablet break your bow and subject you to your enemy; may they turn over the bow in your hands and make your chariot run backwards.<sup>26</sup>

I changed the former names of the cities Kulimmeri, Markuḫa, Kalzu, ... [...] and called [them] by new names. I settled the people plundered by my bow from the Upper Sea (to the) Lower (Sea) in (them). I divided that land, in its entirety, in two and placed two of my officials over them as governors.<sup>27</sup>

He (Esarhaddon) gave to me as my lordly share the inhabitants of conquered lands, foes plundered by his bow. I made them carry hoe (and) basket, and they made bricks.<sup>28</sup>

#### **f) The Reign of Ashurbanipal (668-627 BC)**

Not [with] my [own strength], not with the strength of my bow, but with the power [ ... and] strength of my goddesses, I made the lands disobedient to me submit to the yoke of Assur.<sup>29</sup>

The goddess Ištar who resides in the city Arbella entered and she had quivers hanging on the right and left. She was holding a bow at her side (and) she was unsheathing a sharp sword that (was ready) to do battle.<sup>30</sup>

They captured alive Akkudāya, their herald, (and) brought (him) before me. I forcibly removed the people living in those cities, [took (them) and] settled (them) in Egypt. I made [the people, whom] my bow [plundered] in another land, live in the city Qirbit and its villages.<sup>31</sup>

Itunî, a eunuch of Teumman, the King of the land Elam, whom he (Teumman) insolently sent again and again before me, saw my mighty battle array and, with his iron belt-dagger, cut with his own hand (his) bow, the emblem of his strength.<sup>32</sup>

Teumman, in desperation, said to his son: “Take up the bow.”<sup>33</sup>

[I am] Assurbanipal, king of Assyria, who with the help of Assur, my lord, defeats my enemies and attains the desires of my heart. I built up a ramp against Sha-pi-Bel, fortress of the Gambulians. The brilliance of my majesty overwhelmed Dunanu, son of Bel-iqisha, and he broke his bow. [He and] his magnates, [came before] my envoy with fervent entreaties and they submitted to me.<sup>34</sup>

I, Assurbanipal, king of the world, king of Assyria, whom Assur and Mullissu have granted exalted strength. The lions that I killed: I held the fierce bow of Ishtar, lady of battle, over them, I set up an offering over them, (and) I made a libation over them.<sup>35</sup>

May Ishtar, who resides in Arbela, goddess of battle, [break our bow in the thick of battle] and and make us crouch [under the feet of] our enemy<sup>36</sup>

<sup>22</sup>Leichty, 2011:28

<sup>23</sup>Parpola and Watanabe, 1988:22-23

<sup>24</sup>Parpola and Watanabe, 1988:27

<sup>25</sup>Parpola and Watanabe, 1988:48

<sup>26</sup>Parpola and Watanabe, 1988:53

<sup>27</sup>Leichty, 2011:85

<sup>28</sup>Leichty, 2011:316

<sup>29</sup>Livingstone, 1989:12

<sup>30</sup>Novotny and Jeffers, 2018:152

<sup>31</sup>Novotny and Jeffers, 2018:40-41

<sup>32</sup>Novotny and Jeffers, 2018:320; Russell, 1999:160

<sup>33</sup>Russell, 1999:159

<sup>34</sup>Russell, 1999:161

<sup>35</sup>Russell, 1999:202; Novotny and Jeffers, 2018:349

### 1.2 Bow as a Divine Symbol

In the Neo-Assyrian Period, bows featured prominently when the gods were invoked, reflecting their importance as weapons of war. For instance, reliefs of the Ashurnasirpal II period depict gods holding a bow on a winged disc (Photo 5) and shooting with a bow (Photo 6). In these examples, gods are sometimes depicted with Assyrian soldiers shooting arrows at the enemy with their bows or with a bow in their hands after a victory.<sup>37</sup>



Photo 5: Relief depicting bow as a divine symbol (Layard, 1853a: Plate 21)

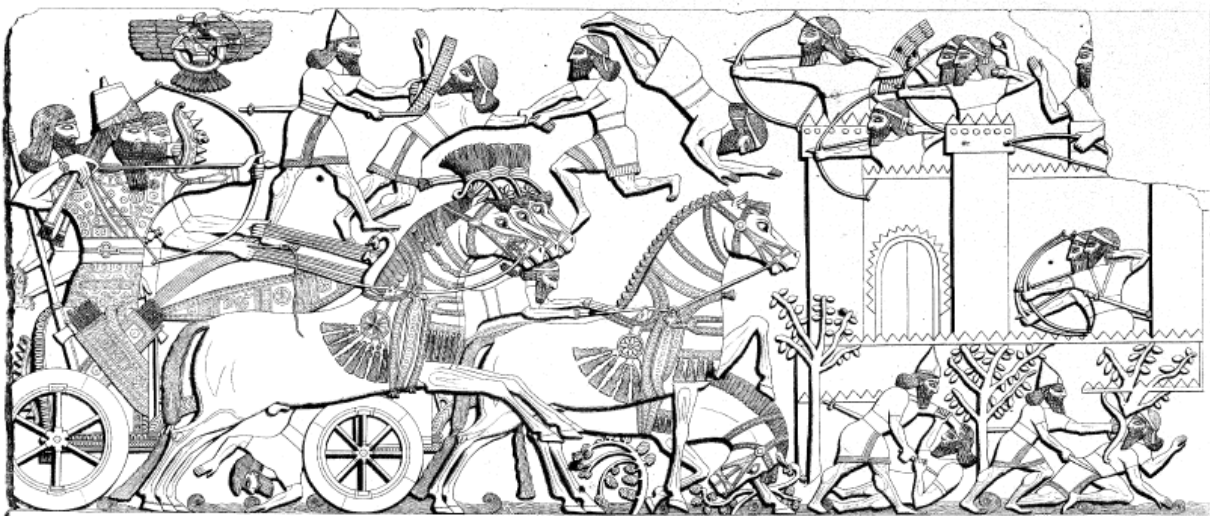


Photo 6: Relief depicting bow as a divine symbol (Layard, 1853a: Plate 13)

### 1.3. Bow as a Symbol of Victory

The first traces of the use of bows as symbols of victory is seen on the stele and rock reliefs dated to the Akkadian Kingdom period. On the Victory Stele of Naram-Sin (2230 BC) in Iran (Susa), the King is depicted with the bow and arrow that enabled him to win the victory. Naram-Sin is shown holding the bow tight on his left chest and holding the arrow that killed his enemies in his right hand. Also, many enemy soldiers killed by arrows shot from these bows are depicted crushed under the feet of the King (Photo 7)<sup>38</sup>.

<sup>36</sup>Parpola and Watanabe, 1988:68

<sup>37</sup>Layard, 1853a: Levha:13, 21

<sup>38</sup>Hamblin, 2006:86-87



Photo 7: Victory Stele of Naram-Sin (Bahrani,2017:124)

Also dated to the Akkadian Empire, our second example is the Naram-Sin rock relief at Darband-i-Gawr near Sulaymaniyah, Iraq. A scene similar to the Victory Stele of Naram-Sin is depicted in this rock relief. The rock relief shows the King who had killed his enemies with his bow and his enemies under his feet. However, unlike the victory stele, the King has an axe in his right hand instead of an arrow (Photo 8).





Photo 8: Naram-Sin Rock Relief at Darband-i-Gawr (Moortgat, 1969: Figure 157)

Our third example is the stele of the Babylonian King Marduk-nadin-ahhe (1099-1082 BC). The King figures depicted on the victory stele and the rock relief at Darband-i-Gawr, both dated to the Akkadian period, hold the bows on their left chests with their left hands and the arrow or the axe in their right hands to the front from above their knees. On the stele of the Babylonian King Marduk-nadin-ahhe, the figure of the King is depicted holding the grip of the bow with his left hand, while holding a double arrow in his right hand (Photo 9)<sup>39</sup>.



Photo 9: Stele of the Babylonian King Marduk-nadin-ahhe (Hall, 1928: Plate IX)

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<sup>39</sup>Russell, 1998:684; Livingstone,1989:52; Hamblin, 2006:218

The bows used as symbols of victory in the Neo-Assyrian Empire are found on the reliefs, door bands, and obelisks dated to the Ashurnasirpal II, Shalmaneser III, Tiglath-Pileser, and Sennacherib periods.

#### a) The Reign of Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BC)

There are many examples of the use of the bow as a symbol of victory during the reign of Ashurnasirpal II.

The first of these examples is the relief dating to the reign of Ashurnasirpal II and depicting the King's boat crossing the river (Photo 10). The King on this relief is depicted in a chariot placed inside the boat. The right hand of the King is holding an arrow in the upward position, while his left hand is depicted with a bow in the downward position. There are two eunuchs in front of and behind the King. This eunuch is possibly depicted showing the captured places and captives to the King. The detailed examination of the relief revealed that the boat is controlled by a long oar attached to the mast, similar to the examples seen in Mesopotamia. Another remarkable detail is that there is evidence on the relief that the King emerged victorious from war. The first of these evidence of victories is the booty horses held by the attendants seen at the back of the boat, while the second evidence is the captives with a rope or chain around their necks.<sup>40</sup>



Photo 10: Relief Dated to the Ashurnasirpal II Period Depicting the Bow as a Symbol of Victory (Layard,1853a: Plate 15)

Our second example depicts the King getting out of his carriage, standing with the crown prince and the eunuchs, and a rebellious Assyrian prostrating himself before the King (Photo 11). On the relief, a bow and a pair of arrows are used as a symbol of the king's military power, while the rebellious Assyrian prostrating himself before the king is used as a sign of defeat or surrender.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup>Layard,1853a:2

<sup>41</sup>Layard,1853a:3

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Photo 11: Relief dated to the Ashurnasirpal II Period Depicting a Rebellious Assyrian Surrendering (Layard, 1853a: Plate 23)

Our third example is the approximately 160 centimeters high Rassam Obelisk made of basalt (Photo 12). It was found in the middle of the Citadel at Nimrud, next to the central temple. Discovered only half intact, the obelisk, which is half intact, survived in fragments until today.<sup>42</sup>



Photo 12: Rassam Obelisk (Reade, 1980: Plate II)

On the Rassam Obelisk, the Assyrian king is depicted with a bow in his left hand. The king is watching a procession of tribute, accompanied by the eunuchs and the crown prince behind and in front of him. The king is expected to have a sword around his waist, a bow in his left hand as a symbol of victory, and a pair of arrows in his right hand. However, the right hand of the king is depicted as empty.<sup>43</sup>

Our fourth example is the bronze bands of the Balawat Gate (Photo 13). On this band, there is a double border at the bottom and top. The outer border is decorated with rosettas, while the inner border line is decorated with flower motifs. In the main scene, the king is depicted with a bow in his left hand as a symbol of victory. Opposite the king facing right, six people are shown, together with the crown prince.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>42</sup>Sevin, 2014:54

<sup>43</sup>Reade, 1980:9

<sup>44</sup>Barnett, Curtis, Davies, Howard and Walker, 2008:Fig95

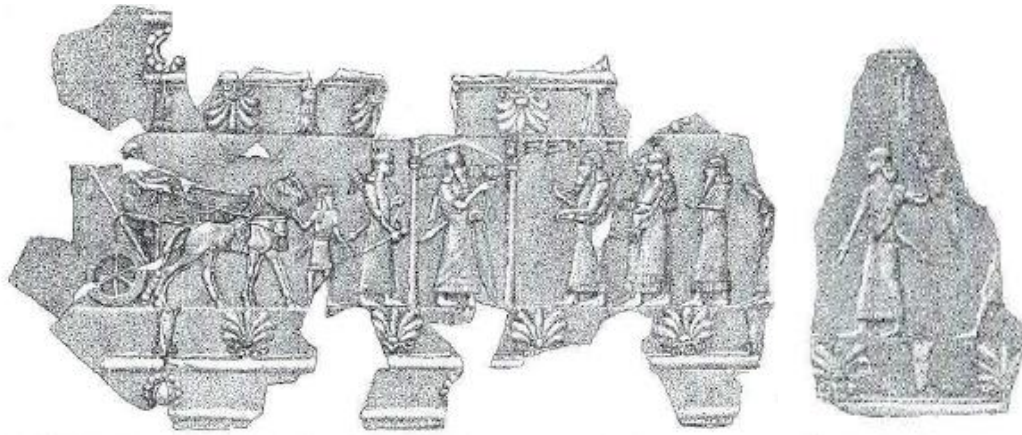


Photo 13: The Balawat Gate (Barnett, Curtis, Davies, Howard, and Walker,2008:Figure 95)

Our last example is a relief depicting the captives and booty taken after a siege war (Photo 14). Unlike the previous examples, on this relief, a eunuch instead of the king is depicted with a bow in his left hand as a symbol of victory, and a pair of arrows in his right hand.<sup>45</sup>

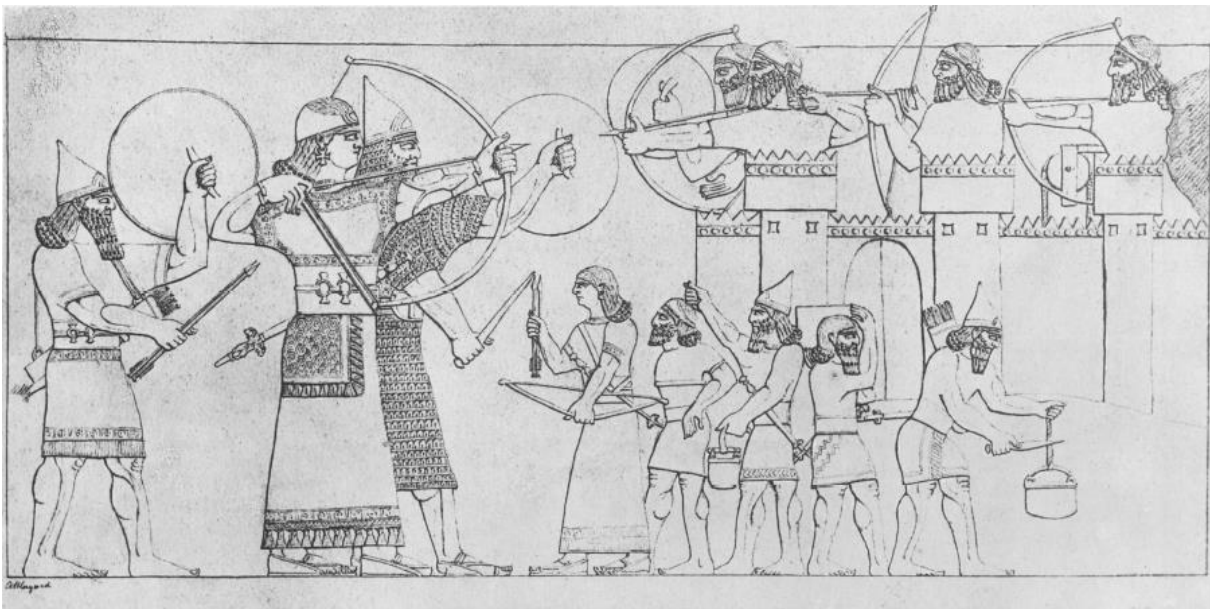


Photo 14: Relief Dated to the Ashurnasirpal II Period Depicting A Eunuch Officer Receiving Captives (Barnet and Falkner,1962: CXXII)

### b) The Reign of Shalmaneser III (858-824 BC)

Dated to the Shalmaneser III period, there are examples on the Bronze Gate and the Black Obelisk showing that the bow was used as a symbol of victory. On the bronze bands of the Balawat Gate, the Assyrian officers are shown delivering the captives after the victory, while the King is shown celebrating his victory with a bow in his left hand under the canopy held by a eunuch (Photo 15).<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup>Barnet and Falkner,1962: CXXII

<sup>46</sup>King,1915:Levha XIV,XV

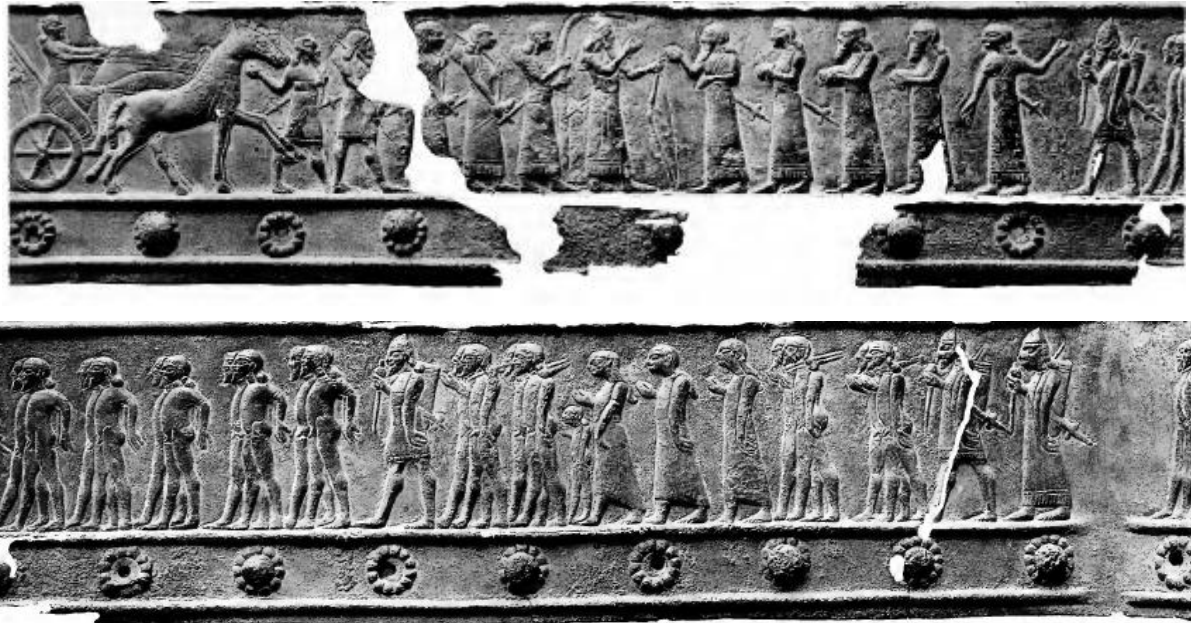


Photo 15: The Bronze Gate Dated to the Shalmaneser III Period (King, 1915 Plate XIV, XV)

Our second example dated to the Shalmaneser III period is the Black Obelisk at Nimrud (Kalhu). On this Obelisk, Sua of Gilzanu is depicted prostrating himself before the bow of Shalmaneser III and begging for mercy, while the King is depicted holding his bow, the symbol of his military victory, in his left hand and his arrow in his right hand (Photo 16).



Photo 16: the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III (Strommenger,1964: 208)

### a) The Reign of Tiglath-Pileser III (744-727 BC)

Dated to the Tiglath-Pileser III, there are examples on visual artifacts showing that the bow was used as a symbol of victory.

The first of these examples is the relief depicting Tiglath-Pileser III sitting on his throne after the Urartian expedition, receiving captives and booty. On this relief, the king is depicted sitting on his throne placed on a pedestal holding the bow in his left hand, the symbol of victory, and a pair of arrows in his right hand. In addition, behind the king, a eunuch waving a fan, and a figure believed to be the crown prince is shown in front of him. Behind the crown prince, an Assyrian soldier is depicted holding a tied prisoner by the ear with his left hand and holding two heads in his other hand (Photo 17).<sup>47</sup>

<sup>47</sup>Barnet and Falkner,1962: 18



Photo 17: Relief Dated to the Tiglath-Pileser III Period Depicting King Receiving Captives (Barnett and Falkner 1962: Plate LIX)

In the second example, the king, the enemy who had lost the war and was begging for mercy, the eunuchs, and the vizier are depicted on a relief. While the king holding the victory symbol bow in his left hand receives the defeated enemy, the defeated enemy prostrates before the King's bow and asks for mercy (Photo 18).<sup>48</sup>



Photo 18: Relief Dated to the Tiglath-Pileser III Period (Barnett and Falkner, 1962: LXXXIVN)

In our third example, the King, the crown prince, the eunuchs, and the enemy begging for mercy are depicted. The king facing left is shown facing the crown prince. A defeated enemy is depicted under the feet of the King holding a bow in his left hand and a spear in his right hand (Photo 19).<sup>49</sup>

<sup>48</sup>Barnett and Falkner, 1962:27

<sup>49</sup>Barnett and Falkner, 1962:29



Photo 19: Relief Dated to the Tiglath-Pileser III Period (Barnett and Falkner, 1962:XCIV; Barnett and Falkner, 1962:CXXII)

While there are no depictions showing that the bow was used as a symbol of victory on the reliefs dated to the reign of Sargon II, depictions are begun to be seen again on the reliefs dated to the reign of Sennacherib. On a relief dated to the Sennacherib period, the King is depicted sitting on his throne in front of his big tent with a bow in his left hand and a pair of arrows in his right hand. In front of the king sitting on his throne, the crown prince, followed by soldiers and captives are shown (Photo 20).<sup>50</sup>



Photo 20: Relief Dated to the Sennacherib Period Depicting the King Receiving Captives (Layard, 1853b: Plate 23)

### Conclusion

Simple bows, which human beings made using wood, plant fiber, and skins of the animals they hunted, have turned into a deadly compound weapons over time with the use of horns, sinew, adhesive, and knowledge.

The scientific studies examining the cuneiform texts, obelisks, seals, seal impressions, wall paintings, and reliefs dated to the Neo-Assyrian period (1000-612 BC) revealed important data on bow types and areas of use. However, the present study focused on bows' areas of use rather than their structural features. The archaeological and epigraphic materials of the period showed that bows were used in different areas such as hunting activities, battlefields, libation scenes, and as a divine symbol.

The bows dated to the Neo-Assyrian period were used as a symbol of victory in addition to the above-mentioned uses. The first examples showing the use of bows as a symbol of victory date back to 2000 BC. Dated to the Neo-Assyrian Period (1000-612 BC), important evidence was uncovered in cuneiform texts and visual works of the period that bows were used as a symbol of victory. Although

<sup>50</sup>Barnett, Bleibtreu and Turner,1998: Levha345; Layard, 1853b: Levha 23

there is no clear statement that bows were used as a symbol of victory in the cuneiform texts, the Goddess and Gods helped the king in victory by defeating the enemies of Assyria.

Visual artifacts showing the use of bows as a symbol of victory are found on palace reliefs, obelisks and door bands dating to the periods of Ashurnasirpal II, Shalmaneser III, Tiglath-Pileser III, and Sennacherib. On these artifacts, the King is depicted holding the bow, the symbol of his victory, in his left hand, while receiving the enemy captives and tribute after the victory. In this period, not only the enemies of the Assyrian Empire were depicted bowing down to the power of the king's bow and accepting defeat, but sometimes the rebellious Assyrians were depicted accepting defeat in front of the king's bow.



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