



MERSİN ÜNİVERSİTESİ KILIKIA ARKEOLOJİSİNİ ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ  
YAYINLARI  
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Prof. Dr. Serra Durugönül  
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Çiftlikköy Kampüsü, 33342 Mersin - TURKEY

Diğer İletişim Adresleri  
Other Correspondance Addresses

Tel: +90 324 361 00 01 • 14730 / 14734

Fax: +90 324 361 00 46

web mail: www.kaam.mersin.edu.tr

www.olba.mersin.edu.tr

e-mail: sdurugonul@gmail.com

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**MERSİN ÜNİVERSİTESİ**  
**KILIKIA ARKEOLOJİSİNİ ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ**  
**BİLİMSEL SÜRELİ YAYINI ‘OLBA’**

**Amaç**

Olba süreli yayını; Küçükasya, Akdeniz bölgesi ve Ortadoğu’ya ilişkin orijinal sonuçlar içeren Arkeolojik çalışmalarda sadece belli bir alan veya bölge ile sınırlı kalmaksızın 'Eski Çağ Bilimleri'ni birbirinden ayırmadan ve bir bütün olarak benimseyerek bilim dünyasına değerli çalışmaları sunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

**Kapsam**

Olba süreli yayını Mayıs ayında olmak üzere yılda bir kez basılır. Yayınlanması istenilen makalelerin en geç her yıl Kasım ayı sonunda gönderilmiş olması gerekmektedir.

1998 yılından bu yana basılan Olba; Küçükasya, Akdeniz bölgesi ve Ortadoğu’ya ilişkin orijinal sonuçlar içeren Prehistorya, Protohistorya, Klasik Arkeoloji, Klasik Filoloji (ile Eskiçağ Dilleri ve Kültürleri), Eskiçağ Tarihi, Nüvizmatik ve Erken Hıristiyanlık Arkeolojisi alanlarında yazılmış makaleleri kapsamaktadır.

**Yayın İlkeleri**

1. a- Makaleler, Word ortamında yazılmış olmalıdır.  
b- Metin 10 punto; özet, dipnot, katalog ve bibliografya 9 punto olmak üzere, Times New Roman (PC ve Macintosh ) harf karakteri kullanılmalıdır.  
c-Dipnotlar her sayfanın altına verilmeli ve makalenin başından sonuna kadar sayısal süreklilik izlemelidir.  
d-Metin içinde bulunan ara başlıklarda, küçük harf kullanılmalı ve koyu (bold) yazılmalıdır. Bunun dışındaki seçenekler (tümünün büyük harf yazılması, alt çizgi ya da italik) kullanılmamalıdır.
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  - c) Metin içinde yer alan “fig.” ibareleri, parantez içinde verilmeli; fig. ibaresinin

noktasından sonra bir tab boşluk bırakılmalı (fig. 3); ikiden fazla ardışık figür belirtiliyorsa iki rakam arasına boşluksuz kısa tire konulmalı (fig. 2-4). Ardışık değilse, sayılar arasına nokta ve bir tab boşluk bırakılmalıdır (fig. 2. 5).

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Dipnot (kitaplar ve makaleler için)

Richter 1977, 162, res. 217.

Diğer Kısaltmalar

age.	adı geçen eser
ay.	aynı yazar
vd.	ve devamı
yak.	yaklaşık
v.d.	ve diğerleri
y.dn.	yukarı dipnot
dn.	dipnot
a.dn.	aşağı dipnot
bk.	Bakınız

4. Tüm resim, çizim ve haritalar için sadece "fig." kısaltması kullanılmalı ve figürlerin numaralandırılmasında süreklilik olmalıdır. (Levha, Resim, Çizim, Şekil, Harita ya da bir başka ifade veya kısaltma kesinlikle kullanılmamalıdır).

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**JOURNAL ‘OLBA’**

**Scope**

Olba is printed once a year in May. Deadline for sending papers is the end of November each year.

The Journal ‘Olba’, being published since 1998 by the ‘Research Center of Cilician Archeology’ of the Mersin University (Turkey), includes original studies done on prehistory, protohistory, classical archaeology, classical philology (and ancient languages and cultures), ancient history, numismatics and early christian archeology of Asia Minor, the Mediterranean region and the Near East.

**Publishing Principles**

1. a. Articles should be written in Word programs.  
b. The text should be written in 10 puntos ; the abstract, footnotes, catalogue and bibliography in 9 puntos ‘Times New Roman’ (for PC and for Macintosh).  
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Footnotes (for books and articles):

Richter 1977, 162, fig. 217.

Miscellaneous Abbreviations:

op. cit.	in the work already cited
idem	an author that has just been mentioned
ff	following pages
et al.	and others
n.	footnote
see	see
infra	see below
supra	see above

4. For all photographs, drawings and maps only the abbreviation ‘fig.’ should be used in continuous numbering (remarks such as Plate, Picture, Drawing, Map or any other word or abbreviation should not be used).
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9. Six keywords should be remarked, following the abstract in Turkish and English or German.
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11. The article, figures and their layout as well as special fonts should be sent by e-mail (We Transfer).

## AN OLD SYRIAN PERIOD STELE FROM AVANOS-AKARCA, ANATOLIA

Elif GENÇ – Uğur YANAR\*

### ÖZ

#### Avanos-Akarca'dan Bir Eski Suriye Dönemi Steli

2014 yılında, Nevşehir ilinin Avanos ilçesine bağlı Akarca köyü yakınlarında köylüler tarafından su çıkarmak amacıyla kazı yapılırken üzeri kabartmalı bir taş bulunmuştur. Tepesi yuvarlak ve dört yüzü düz olan kabartmalı taş, bazalttan bir stelin üst parçasına aittir. Stelin dört yüzüne ve yuvarlak tepesine alçak kabartma tekniği ile figürler işlenmiştir. Figürlerin oluşturduğu ana tema dini içeriklidir ve bunlar kült/ritüel ve ilahi/mitolojik sahneleri yansıtmaktadır. Stelin ön yüzüne (a) sunum sahnesi, sağ yan yüzüne (b) Kanatlı Tanrı ve tapan, arka yüzüne (c) üç katılımcıdan oluşan sunu masalı ziyafet sahnesi, sol yan yüzüne (d) dağların üstünde duran ve boğanın yularını tutan Fırtına Tanrısı ile tanrıça/rahibe, tepesine (e) dağ sıraları betimlenmiştir.

Avanos-Akarca stelinde betimlenen figürlerin üslup ve ikonografik özellikleri Anadolu'ya yabancıdır ve Eski Suriye dönemi figüratif sanatın özelliklerini yansıtmaktadır. Stelin kökenini ve tarihini aydınlatabilecek figürlerden biri ön yüzde yer alan (a) önu sivri çıkıntılı başlıklı krali figürdür. Söz konusu krali figürünün benzerleri Kültepe-Kaniş Karum II. katta, Hamam et-Turkman'da ve Louvre Müzesi koleksiyonunda bulunan Suriye Kapadokya/Eski Suriye koloni üsluplu silindir mühür ve baskılarında ve yine onlarla çağdaş Tell Mardık-Ebla'da bazalt kült tekneleri ve Byblos'ta altın plaka üzerinde görülmektedir. Avanos-Akarca steli krali figürü ile Kültepe, Ebla, Byblos, Hammam et-Turkman figürleri arasında yakın bir ilişki olmalıdır. Söz konusu figürler, Kültepe mühürlerinde kral ve tanrı, Ebla kült teknelerinde kral, Biblos altın plakada tanrı olarak tanımlanmıştır. Bu örnekler hem tapan hem de tapılan olarak tasvir edilen sivri çıkıntılı başlığa sahip figürlerin üstlendiği rollerin yer değiştirebileceğini göstermektedir. Avanos-Akarca steli krali figüre iki ölümlü tarafından sunu yapılarak onun tanrısallık rolü ön plana çıkarılmıştır. Stel muhtemelen ön yüzdeki tanrısallaşmış krala adanmış olmalıdır. Taşın her dört yüzüne işlenen kült/ritüel ve ilahi/mitolojik sahneler, tanrısallaşmış kral adına düzenlenen ve krallığın devamlılığının ilahi varlıklarla desteklendiği ziyafetli bir kült eylemine ışık tutuyor

\* Dr. Elif Genç, Çukurova Üniversitesi, Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi, Arkeoloji Bölümü, 01330 Balcalı/Adana-TR. E-posta: egenc@cu.edu.tr.

Uğur Yanar, Odessa I. I. Mechnikov National University, Department of Archaeology and Ethnology of Ukraine, PhD student. E-posta: uurianar@gmail.com.

Orcid No: 0000-0003-0508-7267; Uğur Yanar: 0000-0003-2712-1729

olmalıdır. Stel, Eski Suriye döneminin karmaşık kült eylemlerini yansıtan kabartmalı figüratif sanat eserlerinden biridir. Ebla'nın erken/klasik Eski Suriye dönemi kabartmalı taş eserleri ile konu ve üslup özellikleri bakımından yakın benzerliği nedeniyle stel Orta Tunç Çağı I ve II başına yaklaşık MÖ 1900-1750 yıllarına ait olmalıdır.

Avanos-Akarca steli, son yıllarda ele geçen Harput kabartması gibi, Anadolu'da bulunan Orta Tunç Çağı'nın az sayıdaki kabartmalı taş eserlerinden biridir. Bu çalışmada, stelin üzerine işlenen figürlerin üslup ve ikonografik özellikleri irdelenirken, figüratif motiflerinin oluşturduğu tema ile ilişkili kült eylemlerine ve stelin kime adandığına cevap aranmış, Anadolu'ya nereden ve nasıl geldiği konusunda bazı olasılıklar üzerinde durulmuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Eski Suriye, stel, kült, Orta Tunç, Avanos-Akarca, Kuzey Suriye, Orta Anadolu.

### ABSTRACT

In 2014, a stele decorated with reliefs was found during an excavation undertaken by the villagers searching for water near the village of Akarca in the Avanos district which belongs to the province Nevşehir. The stele has a rounded top, four flat sides and belongs to the upper part of a larger (now missing) stele made from basalt. Figures were engraved in low relief technique on four sides of the stele and on the rounded top. The main theme the figures depict is religious; they reflect cultic/ritualistic and divine/mythological scenes. A presentation scene is depicted on the observe of the stele (a), a winged deity and a worshipper on the right side (b), a banquet scene with an offering table involving three participants on the reverse (c), a storm god standing on top of the mountains and holding the halter of a bull as well as a goddess/priestess on the left side (d) and a mountain chain on the top (e).

The style and iconographic features of the figures depicted on the Avanos-Akarca stele are foreign to the Anatolian region and reflect the characteristics of Old Syrian figurative art. One of the figures that illuminates the origin and history of the stele is the royal figure with a peaked cap on the front side of the stele (a). Similar figures occur on Syro-Cappadocian/Old Syrian colony style cylinder seals and seal impressions that were found at Kültepe-Kanesh Karum level II, and at Hammam et-Turkman; unprovenanced examples are in the Louvre Museum collection. Such figures from the same era also occur on basalt cult basins from Tell Mardikh-Ebla and on the gold plaque from Byblos. There must be a close relationship between the Avanos-Akarca stele royal figure and the Kültepe, Ebla, Byblos and Hammam et-Turkman figures. The figures in question were defined as a king and a god on the Kültepe seals, on the Ebla cult basins, and on the Byblos gold plaque. These examples show that the roles assumed by the figure with a peaked cap, depicted both as a worshipper and worshipped can change. The divine role of the royal figure on the Avanos-Akarca stele was emphasized by two mortals in the act of giving offerings. The stele must have been dedicated to a deified king. The cultic/ritualistic and divine/mythological scenes engraved on all four sides of the stone shed light on a cultic act with a banquet, organized in the name of the deified king in which the continuity of the kingdom is ensured by divine beings. The stele is an example of the figurative artworks in relief reflecting the complex cultic actions of the Old Syrian period. The stele belongs to the Middle Bronze Age I and II around 1900–1750 BC due to the close similarity with the early/Classical Old Syrian period



stone relief examples from Ebla in terms of subject matter and stylistic features.

The Avanos-Akarca stele is one of the few stone relief pieces from the Middle Bronze Age discovered in Anatolia, like the Harput relief<sup>1</sup> uncovered in recent years. In this study, while the stylistic and iconographic characteristics of the figures on the stele are examined, answers are sought to questions like who the stele belongs to or the reasons of the cult actions related to the themes formed by the figurative motifs. Some possibilities are discussed about where and how the stele came to central Anatolia.

**Keywords:** Old Syria, stele, cult, Middle Bronze, Avanos-Akarca, North Syria, central Anatolia.

## I. Discovery and Description

### a. Discovery

One of the few relief decorated stone examples dated to the Middle Bronze Age was found by coincidence in the vicinity of the Akarca village in the Avanos district of the province Nevşehir in 2014. The village Akarca is located 51 km northeast of Nevşehir center, 25 km northeast of Avanos and 4 km south of the town of Kalaba on the Kayseri-Kırşehir road (fig. 1). The relief decorated stele was found in a depression 1.5 km southwest of the village, which is now formed by a dried-out water source (fig. 2). While excavating for water, villagers found a wall built with regularly cut stones at the southern end of the depression at a depth of about 5–6 m. They stated that they found it at the corner of this wall (fig. 3). Upon hearing the news that a stone with reliefs was found, the villagers were contacted and the stone was delivered to the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in a short period of time. Photographs of the stone's first discovery were not available, but photographs of the wall where it was said to have been unearthed during the excavation were taken by Uğur Yanar, who is one of the authors of this manuscript, a few days later. When the Akarca village was visited again in order to see the place where the stone was located, the wall in question had been covered with earth. During this short visit, a few pieces of pottery were observed above and in the vicinity of the pile of earth, but no trace of the context or settlement which the stone belonged to was visible. Based on the information given by the villagers, the first impression of the stele discovery was that it may have been a reused stone in the wall; the actual context of the stone can only be understood by a systematic excavation.

### b. Description

The relief decorated stone is broken, it has a rounded top, four flat sides and belongs to the upper part of a stele made from basalt. The preserved height, width and thickness of the stele are respectively 0.57 m, 0.35 m, and 0.21 m. Figurative motifs were engraved on four sides of the stele and on its rounded top, using a low relief technique. The figure details were incised on it. The main theme depicted by the

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1 Demir et al. 2016, 7-16.

motifs engraved on each of the four sides is religious and they reflect cultic/ritualistic and divine/mythological scenes. A presentation scene is depicted on the obverse of the stele (a), a winged deity and a worshipper on the right side (b), a banquet scene on the reverse (c), a storm god and a goddess/priestess on the left side (d), and a mountain chain on the top side (e). On two sides of the stone, along the broken part below, only the heads of human figures have been preserved, indicating that the scenes continued into the lower part of the stele which is missing. For this reason, the original height of the stele is thought to be much higher (fig. 4).

#### **Obverse (fig. 4a)**

**Presentation Scene:** Depicted at the top rounded part of the stele is a sun disk and a crescent moon; below it is a recumbent ram and an eight-rayed star motif. Below this, a cult scene is depicted consisting of a standing royal figure facing to the right and two worshippers headed towards him. The royal figure has short hair and a long beard and does not have a mustache. He wears a peaked cap and a vertical fringed robe leaving one shoulder open. He holds a cup in his right hand which he extends forward towards the worshippers. There is an approaching person facing the king and worshipping him. He has short hair and a long beard, he does not have a mustache and wears a fringed robe with one open shoulder. He extends an object/symbol with a triangular top in his right hand and presents it to the king. The second worshipper behind the first one wears a similar robe and carries a poorly preserved situla in his left hand. Both have rounded caps on their head. There are two conical objects/symbols between the king and the worshipper. Hair, beard, and tassels on the robes as well as the coat of the ram are all delineated with wavy lines.

#### **Right side (fig. 4b)**

**Winged deity and worshipper:** The top depicts boulders symbolizing mountains. Beneath the mountains is a winged deity, and just to the right of him is the head of a short male or female figure. The god is facing to the right. He has a horned helmet with knob on top, short hair, and a long beard. He does not have a mustache. He wears a “V” necked dress with striped lapels. Both of his hands are rolled in a fist and touch each other above his abdomen. The wavy wings coming out of the shoulders of the god and opening to the sides, rise up. The figure of the human standing next to the god is turned to the right like the deity. The wings of the god are incised with horizontal lines parallel to each other and his beard and the hair of the male or female figure are delineated with wavy lines.

#### **Reverse (fig. 4c)**

**Banquet Scene:** The scene is arranged in two registers separated by four horizontal bands. The upper register depicts an astral symbol (?) consisting of three nested circles and rectangular reliefs inside two of them; the lower register depicts a ritual banquet scene. In the lower scene, the two male figures sit face to face and hold a cup in their hands that they extend forward. The figure on the left sits on a stool with legs in an “x” that does not have a back rest; whereas the other stool cannot be seen because the stele is broken. They both have long robes, short hair and long beards. The third male

figure, a worshipper, stands between the ones that sit and holds a cup in his hand raised up towards the person sitting on the right. He wears a long robe, has short hair and is beardless. Behind him, there is an offering table with bull feet, two conical shapes on it, and a vessel under it.

#### **Left side (fig. 4d)**

Storm god and goddess/priestess: A storm god facing towards the right kneels on top of a bull depicted amidst an area surrounded by mountains. He holds the bull's rein/halter in his left hand, a curved weapon in his right hand, which rests on his shoulder. The god has a tall headdress (?), long hair and a beard. The standing bull is facing to the right. Its horns, shown from the front facade are distinct and small. The yoke of the bull and the rein that is tied to the yoke extend back to the god. At the bottom, there is a figure of a woman in front of the mountains with just her head and right shoulder visible. She stands facing the right. She has long wavy hair, big almond eyes, a small nose and a closed mouth. There is a slight smile on her face.

#### **Top side (fig. 4e)**

Mountain chains: Mountain chains aligned side by side and one on top of another are depicted on the two sides and on the top side of the stele. The mountain chains that extend from the sides are joined head-to-head on the top, and they consist of 5–6 rows side by side and 15 rows on top of the other. No space was left blank.

## **II. Style and Iconography**

There is a total of 175 depictions, consisting of 10 human figures — composed of gods and worshippers— 2 animal figures, 4 astral symbols, 6 cups, 2 furniture pieces, 3 objects/symbols, 1 weapon and 147 mountains. The cultic/ritual and divine/mythological scenes engraved on all four sides of the stele are among the subjects known from the works of illustrated art in the ancient Near East and especially from Syria.

### **a. Obverse (fig. 4a)**

The sun disk consists of a four-rayed star in two nested circles, four bundles of zig-zag beams emerging from the wings, and eight small circles between the rays and the beam bundles. The sun disk and the crescent motif immediately below it completely cover the top round end of the scene. The recumbent ram and the eight-pointed star motif are depicted in smaller dimensions. The crescent and sun symbols are among the astral symbols known in the art from the prehistoric period in Anatolia, modern Turkey<sup>2</sup> and depicted especially in the glyptic art from the third millennium BC<sup>3</sup>. The sun disk was used as an unchanging symbol of the sun god Shamash (UTU) from the Akkadian period to the late Babylonian period, with the ray of light between the four-pointed star and each of the ends<sup>4</sup>. The crescent is the symbol of the moon god

2 Schmidt 2007, 150, fig. 80.

3 Özgüç 1965, 33; Umurtak 2002, 161-162.

4 Maxwell-Hyslop 1971, 144-145, 147; Black – Green 1992, 168.

Sin (NANNA-SUEN), and the eight-pointed star is the symbol of love and war goddess Ishtar (INANNA)<sup>5</sup>. The sun disk turned into a sun disk with a crescent, which developed during the Ur III period for the first time<sup>6</sup>. The sun disk and crescent, an unchanging motif in worship scenes and placed between gods and worshippers on seals since the end of the third millennium BC, is defined as a general divine symbol representing all gods and goddesses<sup>7</sup>.

Accordingly, the sun disk and crescent above the presentation scene on the Avanos-Akarca stele was a general divine symbol representing all gods and goddesses. However, this symbol differs in that it is depicted in an exaggerated size in the scene. Two similar relief decorated basalt steles depicting the astral symbols in large dimension come from the Syrian region. The first of these is a fragmentary stele uncovered from the base of a house in the village near Tell Mardikh (ancient Ebla city), located 55 km south of Halab/Aleppo in Syria<sup>8</sup>. Only the upper right part of the Mardikh village stele, which has a top with a rounded end, has been preserved. One side of the stele was engraved and the relief decorated figures are bounded by a band on the right-hand side (fig. 5). In the upper part of the scene, a sun disk and crescent is seen with only the right half preserved. Below, the upper half of a tall cylindrical cap of a royal figure is visible. The sun disk and crescent is depicted in much larger dimensions compared to the royal figure. The dimension of the sun disk, with two circles, the rays and small circles between the rays of the star, and the crescent motif in the disk are quite similar to the symbols on the Akarca stele. This similarity between both steles is not limited to the astral symbols. At the same time, they are both made from basalt and have the same thickness. In addition, there are some differences between the steles. The cylindrical cap of the royal figure of the Mardikh village stele is different from the cap of the royal figure on the Akarca stele, and only one facet of the stele is engraved<sup>9</sup>.

The second stele, where astral symbols are largely depicted is the Alsdorf stele, which was in the Art Institute of Chicago until 1999<sup>10</sup> as part of the James and Marilyn Alsdorf Collection in Chicago<sup>11</sup>. The stele, which is broken on all four sides, has only one facet engraved. A sun disk and crescent, the left half of which has been preserved, is depicted. It consists of a banquet scene, a cart pulled by a bull, a bullman and various animal motifs and compared to the figures are quite large completely covering the right side of the scene (fig. 6). The sun disk of the Alsdorf stele also has concentric circles. However, the astral symbols of the Alsdorf stele have a different

5 Maxwell-Hyslop 1971, 142-143; Black – Green 1992, 54, 108-109, 169-170.

6 Collon 1982a, 132.

7 Özgüç 1965, 32-33.

8 Matthiae 1987, 463, fig. 9; 1993, pl. 69. 2.

9 Matthiae 1993, n. 13.

10 The Alsdorf stele was one of the works of art displayed at the auction held in New York in June 1999 by Sotheby, one of the art dealer companies.

11 Di Paolo 2006, figs. 1-2, pl. 1.

composition from the Avanos-Akarca and Mardikh village steles in that they are depicted on the right side rather than on the top side of the scene. Di Paolo dated the stele to the first two centuries of the second millennium BC and stated that the stele could have been produced in southeastern Anatolia or in northwest Syria<sup>12</sup>.

The worship scene depicted under the astral symbols is one of the most important scenes of the Avanos-Akarca stele. The main character of the scene is a royal figure facing right who holds a cup in his hand. There are two worshippers making an offering to the royal figure. While the worshipper in front offers an object/symbol reminiscent of the god Marduk's triangle-headed spade/hoe (*marru*)<sup>13</sup>, the second worshipper presents a situla-like vessel or makes an offering with it. Between the king and the worshipper in front, there are two objects/symbols with a triangular head, only the upper parts of which have been preserved. These could be other objects/symbols on a possible floor or on the altar and offered to the royal figure. The type of cup with a basket-handle that is held by the second worshipper is one of the cup types known from the ancient Near Eastern art<sup>14</sup> and is often found among the vessels offered or used to offer something within religious scenes in glyptic art<sup>15</sup>.

The royal figure is depicted larger than the two male figures facing him. As a rule, in the art of the ancient Near East, the gods are illustrated much larger than the worshippers. For example, the god Ningirsu in Eannatum's vulture stele, the gods Ea and Ningizida in Gudea's stele, the god Shamash in the Law code of the Old Babylonian king Hammurabi, and even Naram-Sin depicted with a horned headgear on the Victory stele, even though he, himself, is the Akkadian king are portrayed much larger than ordinary people<sup>16</sup>. Although the royal figure on the Avanos-Akarca stele is depicted as large as the gods mentioned above, he does not have horned headgear, one of the symbols of divinity.

The royal figure wears a peaked cap, which has a band on the side, a short rear section and a sharp point in front. The closest parallels of this cap with its distinctive shape occur on the glyptic and relief art of the Old Syrian period in the first quarter of the second millennium BC. The figures wearing similar peaked headgear appear on

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12 Di Paolo 2006, 149.

13 Black - Green 1992, 168; Collon 1986, 54, figs. 95, 584.

14 Dörpfeld 1902, 349, figs. 2, 273; Woolley 1934, pl. 184,b, pl. 235,45-46, 49-51; Frankfort 1934, 37-38, figs. 32, 34; Dunand 1958, 377, n.10586, fig. 2, pl. LXXIII; Özgüç - Akok 1958, fig. 6; Delougaz et al. 1967, pl. 74; Parrot 1969, figs. 37, 42, 77-78, 82, 341, 344; Amiet 1980, figs. 593, 596-597, 606, 608-609; Collon 1982c, 95-101; Matthiae 1985, figs. 59, 79c, 86; Özgüç 1986, fig. 58, pl. 127,1; 1988, 13, fig. 32, pl. 29,4; 2005, figs. 253-255; Müller-Karpe 1993, pl. 180; Emre - Çınaroğlu 1993, 711, fig. 6; Sams 1993, 553, pl. 97; Erkanal 1995, 593-604; Sipahi 1995, 711-718; Belli 2003, 276-279.

15 Frankfort 1939, pl. XXIVf; Porada 1948, figs. 245, 252, 259, 383; Buchanan 1981, figs. 434, 455, 472, 475, 899, 936, 945; Collon 1982a, figs. 159, 221, 309; 1986, 34-35 figs. 266, 315, 328, 332, 353, 366-367, 374, 376, 420; Teissier 1984, figs. 108, 112-116; Özgüç 2006, pl. 31 CS 429 and pl. 68 CS 704.

16 Amiet 1980, figs. 49, 68, 329; Parrot 1961, 230, fig. 284.

seals with a Syro-Cappadocian<sup>17</sup>/Syrian Colony<sup>18</sup> style from Kültepe-Kanesh Karum level II and were defined by Nimet Özgüç as “the god and king wearing a cap with pronounced frontal peak”<sup>19</sup> by Edith Porada as “the ruler wears the royal headgear”<sup>20</sup> and by Beatrice Teissier as “the ruler in a cap with a pronounced frontal peak”<sup>21</sup> (fig. 7). These figures depicted on the seal impressions are defined as both king and god. Some of the figures representing “a king” depict him pouring libations to the sitting god/naked goddess and a cup is offered (fig. 7a–e)<sup>22</sup>; those who are “as a god” depict a present offered to him while he is sitting wearing a flounced robe (fig. 7f)<sup>23</sup>. The figures with peaked caps are also known from Tell Mardikh (Ebla), Byblos, Tell Hammam et-Turkman and the seal collection of the Louvre Museum, as well as from Kültepe (figs. 8–11).

A royal figure with a peaked cap is depicted on two cult basins, which have ceremonial banquet scenes, the first discovered in Temple B1 in the south-west part of the Lower Town and the second in the cella of Temple D (Mardikh IIIA) west of the acropolis (figs. 10–11)<sup>24</sup>. The same character appears on a gold plaque found in a votive deposit at Byblos<sup>25</sup>. Here, a god on a throne is depicted with a similar headdress (fig. 9). Another example shows the royal figure with a peaked cap who offers a libation to the enthroned god in the seal of Tell Hammam et-Turkman (fig. 8a)<sup>26</sup> and offers an object to the goddess sitting under a baldachin in the seal from the Louvre (fig. 8b)<sup>27</sup>. The cult basins from Ebla were dated to the early Old Syrian period, about 1900–1850 BC and 1850–1800 BC, while the Byblos gold plaque was dated to 2000–1850 BC. Although the Hammam et-Turkman seal was recovered from the settlement dating to the Middle Bronze II, it belongs to the end of the early Old Syrian period<sup>28</sup>, as did the Louvre seal<sup>29</sup>. There are inscriptions associated with Ebla on some of the seals cut in a Syro-Cappadocian/Syrian Colony style that come from Kültepe-Kanesh Karum level II. Furthermore, the royal figure wearing a peaked cap is also found on the mentioned seals from Kültepe and the cult basins from Ebla. For these reasons, the relationship

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17 Porada 1948, 114.

18 Özgüç – Özgüç 1953, 102.

19 Özgüç – Özgüç 1953, 102; Özgüç 2006, 39.

20 Porada 1985, 94, fig. 16.

21 Teissier 1993, 605.

22 Özgüç – Özgüç 1953, figs. 691–693, 699; Özgüç 2006, pl. 54 CS 597, pl. 57 CS 222, pl. 76 CS 767, pl. 83 CS 819; Teissier 1993, 602, figs. 1-8; 1994, figs. 528, 529a-b, 530, 533-534, 581.

23 Özgüç – Özgüç 1953, fig. 690; Özgüç 2006, pl. 68 CS 704; Teissier 1993, figs. 9-13; 1994, figs. 526-527, 539, 546, 563.

24 Matthiae 1977, 135-136; 1985, figs. 58-59.

25 Dunand 1958, 854, pl. CXXXII, no.16700; Maxwell-Hyslop 1971, fig. 75b.

26 Marchetti 2003, fig. 6; Meijer 2007, fig. 4.

27 Marchetti 2003, fig. 5.

28 Marchetti 2003, 165, n. 13; Meijer 2007, 321.

29 Marchetti – Nigro 1997, 32, n. 93.

between Ebla and Kültepe has been emphasized by many researchers<sup>30</sup>. Teissier stated that "...the cap is not characteristic of Mari, either during the *šakkanakku* or the Lim dynasty period, nor is it worn by subsequent northwest Syrian rulers. Thus on present evidence it would appear to be specific to north-west Syria and perhaps the Levant at the beginning of the second millennium."<sup>31</sup>. Pinnock stated that the cap in question was a characteristic of Ebla specific to the Middle Bronze I, indicating that new religious reforms took place at the beginning of the Old Syrian period as the goddess Ishtar was brought to power in the Ebla pantheon by newly arriving settlers. The Ebla kings, who engaged in cultic activities during this period, wore a peaked cap during religious ceremonies as depicted in cylinder seals and cult basins<sup>32</sup>.

In addition to his peaked cap, the royal figure's fringed robe on the Avanos-Akarca stele with one shoulder open resembles the dress of the royal figure with a peaked cap seen in Old Syrian colony style seals. This type of clothing is known from the art of North Syria-Mesopotamia from the end of the 3rd millennium BC<sup>33</sup>. In particular, the Old Babylonian king, Hammurabi, wears a similar robe, as in his portrayals on his Law code stele. This clothing style, which is generally worn by the king and high-ranking officials, are different from those of the gods<sup>34</sup>. On the Avanos-Akarca stele, one arm of the king extends out to the front, and the other is under the fringed robe. His stance is typical for royal figures before a god. The worshippers facing the king are also dressed in similar garb. As is the case with the king's figure, the closest parallels to the physiognomic characteristics of the worshippers come from the city of Ebla<sup>35</sup>. Although the clothes of soldiers on the cult basins of Temple B1 in Ebla are different from the clothes of the Akarca stele worshippers, the coarse eye shape, haircut, as well as hair and beard details give the impression that the stele was produced with a similar artistic sense.

There must have been a close stylistic relationship between the Avanos-Akarca stele royal figure and Kültepe, Ebla, Byblos and Tell Hammam et-Turkman figures. The figures in question were defined as king and god on Kültepe seals, as king on Ebla cult basins, and as a god on the Byblos gold plaque. These examples show that the roles assumed by the figures with a peaked cap, depicted both as a worshipper and a worshipped can change<sup>36</sup>. In the Tell Mardikh-Ebla documents related to dynastic cults, royal ancestors were made divine by writing the names of the deceased king together with god ideograms. During the 21-day marriage rituals, the royal couple,

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30 Matthiae 1977, 136; Porada 1985, 94; Bilgiç 1992, 61-66; Teissier 1993: 606, 608; 1994, 58, 177, figs. 529a-b; Özgüç 2006, 17, pl. 83 CS 819; Peyronel 2017, 197-215.

31 Teissier 1993, 606.

32 Pinnock 2004, 95, 97-98, 105.

33 Collon 1982a, 130-131, figs. 470-471; Collon 1986, 36.

34 Teissier 1993, 606.

35 Matthiae 1985, fig. 58.

36 Pinnock 2004, 99, n. 30.



who ascends the throne makes offerings to deceased kings together with the gods<sup>37</sup>. Also on the Avanos-Akarca stele, the divine role of the royal figure, who is depicted as a god, was brought to the foreground by being offered a votive gift.

### **b. Right side (fig. 4b)**

The winged deity, seen under the mountains, is depicted much larger than the male or female figure on the left. The formative period of the winged deity motif is first seen in the portrayal of the goddess Ishtar in Akkadian period glyptic art<sup>38</sup>. Winged deities frequently occurred later in the 2nd millennium BC glyptic art as well. In Old Syrian seals, winged deities are often depicted as armed, dressed or naked. These have been interpreted as different aspects of the goddess of love and war, Ishtar because of their more feminine qualities<sup>39</sup>. Sometimes they have been associated with Anat, the goddess of fertility and she is the Levantine Ishtar<sup>40</sup>. Some of the winged deities are interpreted as male gods in Old Syrian glyptic portrayals<sup>41</sup>. Matthiae states that winged deities and goddesses in Old Syrian period seals wear robes different from each other, and male gods wear two-piece skirts with belts<sup>42</sup>. In addition, Matthiae defined the winged deity as Yam/Yammu, the sea god who is mentioned in the mythical cycle of Ba'al of Ugarit. He is the antagonist of the weather god and is often depicted side by side with him<sup>43</sup>. Winged male deities are also seen in other media besides glyptic art. A limestone stele fragment was found in secondary position in the upper Middle Bronze Age building layer at Oylum Höyük<sup>44</sup>. On the limestone stele fragment, a winged deity with eastern Mediterranean stylistic features was defined as Baal-Seth<sup>45</sup> or Reshep<sup>46</sup>, the god of war. In Egyptian art, some Syrian winged deities have been interpreted as Reshep<sup>47</sup>. Many gods and goddesses mentioned in Late Bronze Ugarit written documents are described as winged<sup>48</sup>. Some demons are winged as well. Winged demons frequently appear in Syrian glyptic art<sup>49</sup>. They are portrayed with

37 Archi 2011, 9; 2013, 214, 230.

38 Frankfort 1939, 106, pl. XIXa; Barrelet 1955, 225, pl. XXI, 2, 4; Collon 1982a, 91-92, fig. 190.

39 Barrelet 1955, 240-243, 247; Porada 1948, 128, figs. 958-963; Buchanan 1966, 167, fig. 877; Collon 1975, 182, pl. XX; Teissier 1984, 80-81, figs. 475-476, 483, 487-489.

40 Porada 1977, 2-3; Erkanal 1993, 111.

41 Buchanan 1981, figs. 1189-1190, 1245-1246; Yener, personal communication. Tell Atchana-Alalakh excavations, yielded an unpublished seal impression on a pottery fragment with a winged male deity dated to the Middle Bronze Age/Late Bronze Age I transition. I would like to thank Professor K. Ashlhan Yener, director of the Alalakh excavations.

42 Matthiae 1992, 172; 2016, 288.

43 Matthiae 1992, 175; 2007, 188; 2016, 288-294.

44 Özgen et al. 1997, 57-58, pl. 3,3; Özgen-Helwing 2003, 68, fig. 9.

45 Engin 2011, 35, n.126.

46 Özgen et al. 1997, 59; Özgen-Helwing 2003, 75.

47 Grande 2003, 394.

48 Fensham 1966, 159-163

49 von der Osten 1934, figs. 311, 329; Eisen 1940, fig. 155; Porada 1948, 122-123, 132, figs. 910E, 932E, 933, 936E, 941E, 979E, 984; Buchanan 1966, fig. 899a; 1981, figs. 1183-1184, 1244, 1247-1248, 1273;



animal heads and human bodies or with human heads and animal bodies.

The winged god of the Akarca stele is a bearded male god. None of the winged gods in Old Syrian cylinder seals are depicted as bearded. The wings that protrude from their shoulders and curl up to the sides do not resemble the wings of these gods. Although the curled wavy shape of the god's wings is different, the wings of the shrine above the bull where the goddess is found on the Ebla Ishtar stele<sup>50</sup> and the wings of the Ishtar on the basalt fragment of the cult basin from the lower town, Ishtar Temple (from Area P)<sup>51</sup> show similarities to the Akarca stele because they are portrayed in horizontal lines parallel to each other.

There are well-known parallels of the horned cap in Syrian glyptic. The nearest parallels of the winged god's double horns extending to both sides and protruding from the middle are seen in the cap of storm god (Hadad) and war god (Reshep/Rashap) on Classical Old Syrian cylinder seals dating to the 19–18th centuries BC<sup>52</sup>. It is difficult to identify the winged deity on the Akarca stele, and there are no symbols other than the wings to describe it. Despite this, the winged deity must be one of the gods in the eastern Mediterranean/North Syrian pantheon, due to having a double-horned cap and wings.

### c. Reverse (fig. 4c)

There is an unfinished astral (?) symbol in the upper register of the stele. The symbol covers the scene completely, just like the sun disk and crescent on the obverse (A). The rectangular shapes within the symbol, consisting of seven rectangular shapes in total, three nested circles, one in the center and six between the inner two circles are vague and coarsely engraved. For this reason, it is thought that it was unfinished. The upper part of the outer circle, the edge band and some of the mountain ridges on the top have been worn off.

A ritual banquet scene is depicted in the second register below. Two male personages sit facing one another while a third person stands between them. The scene is completed with a loaded offering table and a vessel. Banquet scenes, often divided into a few registers are a motif dating back to the Early Dynastic I period, perhaps even back to the Uruk period<sup>53</sup>. Very common in glyptic art from Early Dynasty III, this motif constituted one of the main themes of ancient Near Eastern glyptic iconography

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Özgüç 1968, pl. XXIX, 2; Collon 1975, fig. 218, pl. XLV; Collon 1982, 123; Teissier 1984, figs. 437, 469, 495, 497, 527, 532, 534; Moortgat 1988, fig.540; Erkanal 1993, pl. 10 II1-B/04, pl. 16 II5-E/01, pl. 25 VII2-X/01, pl. 30 VII4-A/01; Otto 2000, figs. 70, 81, 101-102, 114, 128, 140, 199-200, 206-207, 209, 212-214, 224, 229, 282, 285, 314, 327.

50 Matthiae 1987, 458, 476-477, figs. 4, 15, A2; 2013a, 103, fig. 9.

51 Matthiae 2013a, 102, fig. 7.

52 Matthiae 1992, 170; Matthiae 2007, 187-188. On a cylinder seal found in Tell Atchana, the sun god wears a flat-topped peaked cap. The peaked shape of his hat is reminiscent of the cap of the winged god of the Akarca stele, see Collon 1982, 40-41 fig. 9; Collon 2017, 131 fig. 9.4.

53 Amiet 1961, 119, 123; Hansen 1963, 161; Teissier 1984, 10.

until the end of the Late Assyrian Empire<sup>54</sup>. The banquet scenes are one of the most popular topics on votive plaques recovered from temples dating from Early Dynastic II and also confirm the ceremonial character of this subject<sup>55</sup>.

One of the elements that characterize the banquet scenes are the main characters of the scene, formed by one or more seated personages, perhaps indicating diversity<sup>56</sup>. Generally, the main characters can be either be male or female, or male and female couples. They sit in the same or opposite direction when there is more than one person on the scene. They are usually depicted as drinking from a reed inside a vessel placed between them, while holding a cup in one hand<sup>57</sup>, or eating food from a table in front of them<sup>58</sup>. While scenes of drinking from a vessel or a cup is common in southern Mesopotamia during Early Dynastic III, the scene of eating from a table is common in northern Syria during the same period<sup>59</sup>. Sometimes, one or two other people standing between the sitting figures are added<sup>60</sup> or the seated figures are accompanied by musicians<sup>61</sup>. The banquets of the Early Dynastic period are considered to be related to the diversity of celebrations rather than reflect a single ritual or festival<sup>62</sup>. They are interpreted as post-war victory celebrations, New Year's festivals and sacred marriage ceremonies related to agricultural productivity and fertility attended by the royal couple<sup>63</sup>. The banquet scenes of the Akkadian period maintain the characteristics of the previous period, but the subject is reduced to the main characters, and horned caps of a few of the figures reveal their divine nature<sup>64</sup>. At the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC, this issue was recorded in a few examples in the seals of the Isin-Larsa period<sup>65</sup>. Banquet scenes of the Old Syrian period in Syria were also associated with funeral rituals, unlike that of Mesopotamia<sup>66</sup>. Pinnock summed up the banquet scenes as three groups, based on the number of main characters, their gender, and the diversity of secondary subjects. The first contain scenes about New Year's festivals and sacred marriage ceremonies in which a couple takes part; the second group contains scenes for post-war victory celebrations in which three or more men are present; the third have

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54 Teissier 1984, 10–11.

55 Frankfort 1939, 77; Porada 1948, 15; Teissier 1984, 10; Collon 1987, 27.

56 Porada 1948, 16; Teissier 1984, 10; Pinnock 1994, 15.

57 Hansen 1963, pl. V; Frankfort 1939, pl. XVa, f; Porada 1948, 16, figs. 107, 111–112, 115–116, 118E; Buchanan 1966, figs. 230–232; Teissier 1984, fig. 63; Moortgat 1988, figs. 140–141.

58 Collon 1987, 27, fig. 72.

59 Collon 1987, 27.

60 Frankfort 1939, pl. XVc; Porada 1948, figs. 106E, 113E; Buchanan 1966, figs. 228–229; Moortgat 1988, figs. 101–102, 134–138.

61 Frankfort 1969: 34–35 pls. 33, 37; Teissier 1984, 11.

62 Amiet 1961, 119; Pinnock 1994, 19, 24.

63 Amiet 1961, 119; Frankfort 1969, 33; Pinnock 1994, 19–20.

64 Porada 1948, 30 figs. 248–251; Buchanan 1966, fig. 291; Collon 1982a, figs. 241–242; Teissier 1984, figs. 87–89.

65 Pinnock 1994, 16.

66 Pinnock 1994, 19–21.

scenes for a funeral ceremony, which is composed of only one person, either alone or with an attendant. Pinnock stated that the first two were widespread during the Early Dynastic period, but the third was less known during the Early Dynastic period, but well known during and after the Akkadian period, especially in Syria<sup>67</sup>.

The main characters of the Old Syrian banquet scenes are sometimes a seated male who has a standing attendant and sometimes a couple consisting of a woman and man. The person who hosts the banquet is mostly a royal person and if the person is a woman, then she is described as a queen or a priestess. The king sits alone or with the queen/priestess beside an offering table. The banquet scenes occur not only in glyptic art from the beginning of the Old Syrian period but also as the subjects of relief decorated stones. The best known examples are the two cult basins with a scene of sacred banquet dated to the Tell Mardikh-Ebla Middle Bronze I. The first was found at the southwest corner of the cella in Temple D in the Acropolis dedicated to the goddess Ishtar<sup>68</sup>. Reliefs appear on three sides and on the long front side of the limestone basin; a male and female couple sit facing each other and have an offering table with bull feet in between them (fig. 10). The king with a peaked cap and the long-haired queen or high priestess each hold a cup in their hands. Behind the king are the officers of the armed forces and the priestesses who carry *situlae* behind the queen/priestess. Matthiae interpreted the scene in the cult basin as a banquet at the end of a sacred marriage ritual<sup>69</sup>. The second basin which was dedicated to Reshep/Rashap, the god of war and the underworld was recovered from Temple B1, southwest of the citadel in the lower town<sup>70</sup>. This was dated to a little older than the cult basin of Temple D (fig. 11). In the upper register of the main scene which is surrounded by lion protomes, a banquet scene is depicted on the left side of a tall bull-man figure. A king with a peaked cap sits alone and holds a cup in his hand. In front of the king, there is a table with bull feet. On the other side of the table is a standing crown prince holding a cup towards the king<sup>71</sup>. Armed soldiers are lined up behind the king and on both sides of the basin. The scene of the king sitting alone in front of the offering table is associated with an ancestral cult funeral ritual<sup>72</sup>. Another basalt relief fragment featuring a banquet is in the Idlib Archeological Museum<sup>73</sup>. The basalt piece is thought to have come from Tell Mardikh and was dated to 1900–1800 BC, like the cult basins. A royal figure who is sitting and facing the left side and an offering table have been preserved on the broken piece. The royal figure, unlike the ones on the cult basins, drinks from the cup in front of him<sup>74</sup>.

Apart from Ebla, three steles dated to the Old Syrian period also depict a banquet

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67 Pinnock 1994, 21.

68 Matthiae 1977, 130-131, 136; Matthiae 1985, fig. 59, Mardikh IIIA, ca. 1850-1800 BC.

69 Matthiae 2013a, 101; Matthiae 2013b, 383.

70 Matthiae 1977, 125-128; Matthiae 1985, fig. 58, Mardikh IIIA, ca. 1900-1850 BC.

71 Matthiae 1997, 404; Matthiae 2013a, 101.

72 Matthiae 2013a, 101; Matthiae 2013b, 384.

73 Matthiae 2011, 770, fig. 29.

74 Matthiae 2011, 770-771.

scene. The first of them is the Hama stele. Under the sun disk with a crescent, a royal figure sits alone next to the offering table, and an attendant stands in front of him. Both hold a cup in their hands which they extend forward<sup>75</sup>. Pinnock dated the stele to about 1950–1750 BC and related it to a funeral ritual<sup>76</sup>. The second one is the Fredje stele. In this stele, discovered during a surface survey near Hama, a royal couple sits at two sides of an offering table, facing each other, and there is a child on the woman's lap<sup>77</sup>. The third is the Alsdorf stele, where a banquet scene is depicted at the left side of a sun disk and crescent. A royal figure is depicted holding a cup in his hand, to the right of an offering table; a probable queen is at the left edge, with only the legs preserved<sup>78</sup>. Di Paolo dated the stele to the first two centuries of the 2nd millennium BC, and Matthiae dated it to Middle Bronze II<sup>79</sup>. Matthiae also interpreted the style of the Hama, Fredje and Alsdorf steles as provincial, in comparison to the high quality Ebla relief decorated steles<sup>80</sup>.

The Avanos-Akarca stele is similar to the banquet scene examples mentioned above in that the main characters of the banquet scene sit facing each other at the two sides of a similar offering table, but there are also some differences. While the main characters of the Ebla cult basin (D) and Fredje stele and possibly the Alsdorf stele are a royal couple, both of the main characters of the Akarca stele are males. As in the Ebla cult basin (B1) and Hama stele, an attendant holding a cup in his hand and standing in front of the royal figure who sits alone, is seen in between two people in the Akarca stele. The standing figure is depicted smaller than the seated figures, as in the Hama stele. Moreover, stools similar to the “x”-shaped stool of the character on the left occurs on the Hama stele, on the Ishtar stele (fig. 12) and on the ivory talisman recovered from the tomb of the Lord of the Goats in Ebla<sup>81</sup>. The banquet scenes composed of the royal figures sitting on the “x”-shaped stool on the Hama stele and Ebla ivory talisman were associated with a funeral ritual<sup>82</sup>. The banquet scenes composed of two male characters are also known from Classical and late Old Syrian period seals. These characters are usually two people and always male seated face to face. They hold a cup in one hand, and sometimes loaded offering tables are between them. This type of banquet scene is usually a secondary subject, with the main scene involving divine or royal figures or both<sup>83</sup>. Pinnock establishes a connection between kingdoms

75 Orthmann 1971, 104, 484, pl. 7b; Pinnock 1992, fig. 1; Matthiae 2013b, 383, fig. 209.

76 Pinnock 1992, 101-102, 116, 119.

77 Orthmann 1971: 104, 483, pl. 7c.

78 Di Paolo 2006, 141-149, figs. 1-2, pl. 1.

79 Matthiae 2013b, 383, fig. 210.

80 Matthiae 2013b, 383.

81 Matthiae 1985, pl. 79c (ca. 1750–1700 BC); Matthiae 1987, figs. 4-5; Matthiae 1997, fig. 14.25.

82 Pinnock 1992, 116; Matthiae 1997, 406.

83 Delaporte 1923, pl. 95, 24(A.897), pl. 96, 4(A.907), pl. 97, 4(A.932); von der Osten 1934, fig. 297; Gordon 1939, pl. VI, 46; Frankfort 1939, pl XLII, h; Eisen 1940, figs. 153, 175; Porada 1948, figs. 944E, 946E, 988; Collon 1982b, fig. 16; Teissier 1984, figs. 440, 453, 478; Erkanal 1993, pl.18 III2-X/01; Otto 2000, pl. 12,147, pl. 14,167, pl. 15,170; Özgüç 1977, 367, pl.5, 13; Özgüç 2015, fig. 97.

and banquets functioning as a bridge between the deceased and living kings. This notion is based upon the frequent presence of banquet scenes together with the royal figures on seals of the period in question<sup>84</sup>. On the Avanos-Akarca stele, the figure that represents the kingdom that establishes the relationship between the banquet scene and the kingdom, as proposed by Pinnock is absent from the back side of the stele (C). However, considering that there is a king with a peaked cap who has both royal and divine functions on the obverse (A) and that the subjects that were engraved on both sides of the stele are related to each other, it can be assumed that the banquet scene is a scene related to a kingdom as Pinnock suggested, though not identified on our stele.

Offering tables that are amongst one or two sitting people and full of food are among the other defining elements of banquet scenes. On the Akarca stele, the offering table with bull feet, that stands amongst figures seated face to face and has food on it that has been offered reveals the religious character of the scene. The offering table has a thick tray. The bull legs that descend down from the middle of the tray and curve to the sides at the bottom merge with the supports that come down from the sides. This type of offering table with bull feet is one of the cultic furniture portrayed in the Middle Bronze I not only on cylinder seals but also on the relief decorated stones from the Syrian and Anatolian regions. The earliest examples of tables with bull feet go back to the mid-3rd millennium BC. For example, a two-register banquet scene is depicted on a lapis lazuli seal recovered from Puabi's grave (PG800, U.10939), one of the Ur King's graves during the Early Dynastic period. On the lower register, a tall table laden with food has bull feet<sup>85</sup>. There is another table with bull feet in front of the god who is sitting on the throne on a seal dating to the Akkadian period<sup>86</sup>. The closest analogues of the Avanos-Akarca offering table is well known in the glyptic of Kültepe-Kanesh Karum level II (ca. 1927–1836 BC). In addition to the cylinder seals of the Old Syrian-colony and the Anatolian style, these types of offering tables and their variations are found on the Old Assyrian style seals<sup>87</sup>. The offering tables in the Old Syrian colony, Anatolian and Old Assyrian seal impressions always stand in front of various sitting gods and a bull with a cone on its back<sup>88</sup>. An offering table is depicted on a broken basalt relief decorated stele fragment recovered from the Late Bronze I level in Ebla<sup>89</sup>. While Pinnock placed such an offering table in the early Old

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84 Pinnock 1992, 118; 1994, 21–22.

85 Pittman 1998, 78, fig. 46b.

86 Delaporte 1923, 114, pl. 74, 6(A.177).

87 Özgüç – Özgüç 1953, 105; Özgüç – Tunca 2001, pl. 24 CS138, pl. 25 CS142, CS143, pl.27 CS155, CS160, pl. 28 CS167, pl. 29 CS172, pl. 33 CS199, Old Syrian colony style seals pl. 2 CS11, pl. 21 CS117, the Old Assyrian style seal pl. 26 CS147, pl. 33 CS203; Özgüç 1965, 12, pl. I,1-2, pl. II,5-6, pl. III,8, pl. IV,11a, pl. V,15a-b, pl. VI,17, pl. XI,32, pl. XIII,37-39, pl. XIV,40,42, pl. XIX,57, pl. XX,61, pl. XXIII,70, pl. XIV,71-72, pl. XV,75a,b, pl. XXVI,77-78; 2006, pl. 7 CS291, pl. 11 CS311, pl. 14 CS328, pl. 17 CS345, pl. 18 CS353, pl.38 CS485, pl. 45 CS538, pl. 56 CS613.

88 Özgüç 1965, 12.

89 Pinnock 2000, 1400–1401, fig. 6a.

Syrian period<sup>90</sup>, she stated that the offering tables were often depicted in front of seated figures in libation-related cultic activities or banquet scenes<sup>91</sup>. It was also thought that the base of a piece of basalt furniture from Temple P2 at the large sacred area of Ishtar in the Lower Town in northwest Ebla is part of an offering table with bull feet<sup>92</sup>. Matthiae compared the basalt offering table with those on the Ebla cult basins and with the Old Syrian colony and Anatolian style cylinder seals<sup>93</sup>.

Food or various offerings always occur on offering tables. Teissier interprets food on an altar as closely related to early 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC Syrian iconography<sup>94</sup>. There are two triangular shapes on top of the offering table of the Akarca stele. Shapes similar to these figures are known in the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC from cylinder seals and relief decorated stone slabs<sup>95</sup>. There are two triangular objects above the offering table on the front side (A3a) of the Ishtar stele in Ebla between the musicians (fig. 12). Single or double triangle motifs were interpreted especially with the help of examples with well-traceable details as unleavened pieces of bread/pita that are stacked on top of each other<sup>96</sup>. The two triangular shapes on the offering table of the Akarca stele should be interpreted as flat breads that are stacked on top of each other, although their details cannot be seen.

Kültepe, Ebla, Hama, Fredje and Akarca-type, side-supported, bull-feet offering tables are known from Syria and Anatolia from the 20<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. This type continued to be portrayed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century even though the number of occurrences was low<sup>97</sup>. However, from the 18<sup>th</sup> century BC onwards, different types of offering tables with flat or curved bull feet like the offering table on the Alsdorf stele and the one on the ivory talisman from the tomb of the Lord of the Goats in Ebla<sup>98</sup> have emerged<sup>99</sup>. This new type does not have supports that descend steeply from its sides and merge with the bull feet. The new type, defined as Syrian<sup>100</sup>, is completely different from the offering table of the Akarca stele.

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90 Pinnock 1992, 110.

91 Pinnock 2000, 1400.

92 Matthiae 1994, 173-174, figs. 3-4.

93 Matthiae 1994, 174-175.

94 Teissier 1984, 70, fig. 359.

95 Buchanan 1966, figs. 841-842; Matthiae 1987, 458, fig. 4, A3a; Matthiae 1997, 404, fig. 14.24.

96 Pinnock 1992, 110; Erkanal 1993, 24, pl. 7, I-A/13, 75, pl. 29, VII3-X/12; Matthiae 1985, pl. 58; 2013a, 101.

97 Özgüç 1968, 11, pl. XVIII.İ; Erkanal 1993, 77, pl. 30, fig. VII3-X/15.

98 Matthiae 1985, fig. 79c.

99 von der Osten 1934, pl. XXII, 305, 308; Porada 1948, 119, figs. 913E, 915, 944E, 946E, 987; Özgüç 1968, 19, pl. XIII-B, pl. XXVI-3; Collon 1982b, fig. 22; Teissier 1984, figs. 457-460, 462, 464-465, 479, 542; Erkanal 1993, 75, pl. 29-VII3-X/12.

100 Porada 1948, 119.

#### d. Left Side (fig. 4d)

Unlike the winged deity (b), it is possible to identify the god on the left side. The god depicted with a bull is a storm god. In regions based on precipitation dependent agriculture, not only in Upper Mesopotamia-Syria and Anatolia, but also in many parts of the ancient Near East, storm gods have an important place in local pantheons<sup>101</sup>. The establishment of various links between different regions and cultures has led to give different names to the storm god<sup>102</sup>. Such as Iskur in Sumerian; Hadda, Haddu, Hadad (Syria-Palestine, Upper Mesopotamia) in western Semitic; Adad and Addu (Babylonian, Assyrian countries) in Akkadian; Ba'lu (Ba'al) in Syro-Palestine; Taru in Hattian; Teshup in Hurrian; Tarhun(t) in Hittite-Luwian; and Teisheba in Urartian<sup>103</sup>.

In Syrian iconography the storm god is shown with a short kilt and a horned cap; the cap has a pointed tip; the god has curved, long hair extending down along his back and is mostly shown with his bull, while swinging a mace which he holds in his hand in a threatening stance; he holds a snake or lightning fork with an ax or a curved throw-stick in the other hand<sup>104</sup>. The storm god on the Avanos-Akarca stele, steps on the back of a bull, which stands on the mountains in a non-threatening stance. He holds the bull's halter in his left hand and his curved throwing-stick in his right hand, which he has rested on his shoulder. Instead of the traditional weapons of the god, which are a mace and ax, this is a weapon with a curved end here. The curved throwing-stick occurs amongst the weapons of the storm gods. On an Old Syrian colony style seal, the storm god, who steps on the back of a bull with a single foot, holds a curved throwing-stick together with the bull's halter<sup>105</sup>. Similar weapons are also seen in the hands of the storm god in Classical Old Syrian seals<sup>106</sup>. The portrayals of storm gods began to come to the forefront with Halab/Yamhad (Aleppo) gaining dominance as the regional leader, especially after 1800 BC<sup>107</sup>. Hadad, the chief god of the city, and characteristic of Halab iconography, is often depicted in glyptic art and also on steles<sup>108</sup>.

There is a figure of a woman below the mountains. She has long wavy hair. Only her head and right shoulder have been preserved. The storm god and the naked goddess or Syrian women/priestess are always seen together in scenes where a royal figure with a peaked cap appears on the Old Syrian colony style seals from Kültepe-Kanesh Karum level II, of which we saw a close similarity with the Avanos-Akarca

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101 Schwemer 2008, 121-124.

102 Schwemer 2008, 124.

103 Schwemer 2008, 125; Collon 1972, 131; Collon 1975, 184; Teissier 1984, 79.

104 Porada 1948, 129-130; Collon 1975, 184; Teissier 1984, 79; Erkanal 1993, 117, pl. 4; Green 2003, 156.

105 Teissier 1984, fig. 426.

106 von der Osten 1934, figs. 324, 327; von der Osten 1936, figs. 90, 94; Eisen 1940, fig. 147; Moortgat 1988, fig. 523; Teissier 1984, 79, fig. 476; Erkanal 1993, 14, 117, pl. 2, I-B/03, pl. 45.

107 Pinnock 2004, 114-115.

108 Matthiae 1993, 389-397, pl. 69, fig. 1; Pinnock 1980, 23-32, fig. 3; 2004, 112-113 fig. 22; Marchetti 2007, 153-157, figs. 5, 9-10, 21.



stele<sup>109</sup> (fig. 7a-c). The female figures are central figures depicted in almost all of the current images<sup>110</sup>. In addition to the Kültepe seals, a long-haired Syrian woman/priestess figure is also depicted on the seal from Louvre Museum and Tell Hammam et-Turkman, which has royal figures with peaked caps<sup>111</sup> (fig. 8). While the naked goddess was described as a different aspect of the goddess Ishtar<sup>112</sup>, the figure of the Syrian woman or priestess has often been interpreted as a priestess associated with the cult activities of the goddess Ishtar because she was portrayed in cult activities alongside the temple or offering table<sup>113</sup>. In the Akarca stele, the long, wavy hair of the woman just below the storm god is reminiscent of the long hair of the Syrian woman/priestess, but it cannot be understood from the existing remains whether she is dressed like her. The long-haired woman of the Avanos-Akarca stele must be the nude goddess or Syrian woman/priestess who is always next to the storm god. This female figure depicts Anat, perhaps his sister and consort, who is always beside the storm god mentioned in Ugarit myths<sup>114</sup>.

#### e. Top side (fig. 5e)

The side-by-side and one-on-top-of-the-other alignment of mountain representations of the stele extending from the two side facets and joining at the round top is well known from ancient Near Eastern art. The goddess and worshipper on the offering plaque dated to the Early Dynastic III<sup>115</sup>, the gods on the seal of the Akkadian period<sup>116</sup>, the naked goddess with wings on terracotta plaque from the Old Babylonian period<sup>117</sup>, and the sun god on the Hammurabi law code stele<sup>118</sup> all step on such ridges of mountains. Moreover, the bottom section of the sun god, plant gods and mountain gods is stylistically depicted as a ridge of mountains<sup>119</sup>.

### III. Morphological Structure of the Stele, Interpretation of the Scenes and Origin of the Stele

Although the stele has worn edges, it has a morphological structure that tapers

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109 Özgüç – Özgüç 1953, figs. 691-692; Özgüç 2006, pl. 54 CS597; Teissier 1984, 79; 1993, figs. 1-2, 7, 10.

110 Teissier 1993, figs. 1-11,13; Pinnock 2004, 99; Özgüç – Özgüç 1953, figs. 690-693, 699, Özgüç 2006, 16, pl. 54 CS597, pl. 57 CS222, pl. 68 CS704, pl. 76 CS767, pl. 83 CS819.

111 Marchetti 2003, figs. 5-6; Meijer 2007, fig. 4.

112 Barrelet 1955, 222-260.

113 Pinnock 2000, 1400, fig. 4; Pinnock 2008, 512-514.

114 Teissier 1984, 79; Matthiae 1992, 174-175, figs. 2, 4, 18; Gibson 2004, 2-9; Özgüç 2006, 9, 195.

115 Amiet 1980, fig. 337.

116 Collon 1982a, fig. 190.

117 Parrot 1969, fig. 358.

118 Amiet 1980, fig. 444.

119 Parrot 1969, figs. 9 and 329; Alexander 1970, figs. 1-2; Orthmann 1975, fig. 161; Amiet 1980, fig. 514; Moortgat-Correns 1986, pls 36-37; Özgüç 2002, 245, fig. 3.



from bottom to top. The reliefs with figurative motifs were engraved on four sides of the stele. For this reason, the stele must have been produced in order to be erected in a location so that it can be visible from every direction. The tradition of narrating a subject in ancient Near Eastern relief art by dividing it into separate sections or registers is widespread; the friezes are hierarchically ordered from the bottom up according to the importance of the subject. The most important scene is at the top, and secondary scenes are at the bottom. Scenes on the Avanos-Akarca stele that form the upper part of the stele and are engraved on all four sides must be the most important scenes of the stele. The missing sub-section was likely to have secondary topics linked to the top scenes. Bands separating the images are not found on the other sides (a, b and d) except for the back side (c) of the stele. On the back side (c), the two scenes consisting of the astral symbol (?) and the banquet scene are separated by four horizontal bands.

The closest parallel to the Avanos-Akarca stele in terms of morphology and iconography is the Ishtar stele of Tell Mardikh (Ebla) dated to 1800–1750 BC (Fig. 12). The stele was recovered in an upright position at the entrance of the temple at the sanctuary area G3 in the citadel<sup>120</sup>. This stele without a top part is approximately 1.72 m in height. Matthiae thinks that the original height of stele cannot be less than 2.20–2.25 m<sup>121</sup>. The Ishtar stele has a conical appearance that tapers from bottom to top. According to Matthiae, the missing upper part of the stele is round, like the stele fragment from Mardikh village<sup>122</sup> (fig. 5). Moreover, Matthiae thinks that as in the Mardikh village stele, there must be a sun disk and crescent and, below that, the most important scene of the stele on the missing upper part of the Ishtar stele and that it may be something similar to the sacred banquet scene seen on the cult basins of Ebla<sup>123</sup>. On the Avanos-Akarca stele, there is a sun disk with a crescent, a royal figure and a banquet scene, as suggested by Matthiae. Furthermore, there are also divine figures.

In Ebla, three or four sides of the cult basin from the Old Syrian relief decorated stone slabs, four sides of the Ishtar obelisk<sup>124</sup>, and the Ishtar stele are equipped with relief patterns. Figurative motifs on the Ishtar stele and on the obelisk are divided into delineated areas and, as in the case of the Akarca stele, these areas are separated from each other by four horizontal bands. Although the clothes of the Akarca stele figures are different, their human physiognomies, hair-beard styles, linear details, and also the way how the standing figures' naked feet were portrayed resemble those of the figures on the Ebla relief art. The upper part of the Akarca stele, and the lower part of the Ishtar stele and obelisk have been preserved. While the Ishtar obelisk has an equal thickness in all directions (0.37/0.38 m–0.35/0.36 m), the Ishtar stele is 0.46 m wide and 0.25–0.27 m thick. Akarca is structurally closer to the Ishtar stele with 0.35 m width and 0.21 m thickness, but it is in smaller dimensions. It is obvious that the

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120 Matthiae 1987, 450–451, figs. 2, 4.

121 Matthiae 1987, 464.

122 Matthiae 1987, 463–464, fig. 9.

123 Matthiae 1987, 460, 462, 471.

124 Matthiae 2011, figs. 25–27.

dimensions of the both steles are in harmony with each other, considering that the morphological structures of the steles get narrower from bottom to top. The outer frame of side A of the Ishtar stele is decorated with four parallel bands. The outer frame of the back side (c) of the Akarca stele is plain but decorated with horizontal bands between the registers. Although the dimensions of the steles are close to each other, they should be regarded as steles that were produced in the same manner but are two separate steles due to the differences in the clothes of the figures and the undecorated outer frame.

Matthiae divided the themes represented on the four sides of the Ishtar stele into three; a divine theme, cult theme and mythic theme, and interpreted them as stages related to the god to whom the stele was dedicated and his cult actions<sup>125</sup>. The divine figure on the front side (a2) of the Ishtar stele is the goddess in a winged shrine supported by bull-men. The stele was found in the temple of Ishtar in Ebla and devoted to the great goddess Ishtar, the royal guardian of Ebla city<sup>126</sup>. The protagonist of the main scene supported by the sun disk and crescent on the Avanos-Akarca stele is the royal figure with a peaked cap. One of the Ebla cult basins (d) in which royal figures with similar caps are found is associated with a sacred marriage ritual and is dedicated to Ishtar, the goddess of love and fertility, who blesses the kingdom of Ebla city. The other (b1) is associated with a funeral ritual and is dedicated to Reshep, the god of the hereafter. The Avanos-Akarca stele reflects a banqueting cult organized presumably for the king, who is deceased/whose divinity was brought out and to whom offerings are made by two mortals. Perhaps it is a stele that was dedicated to him.

The divine scenes on the sides of the Avanos-Akarca stele should be as important as the ones on the front and back sides. Despite being depicted in two separate scenes, the storm god, the goddess/priestess and the winged deity were often depicted together in Classical and late Old Syrian seals<sup>127</sup>. This situation brings to mind the Baal, Anat and Yam god trilogy mentioned in Ugarit myths<sup>128</sup>. Matthiae associated the divine trilogy with the Baal myth describing how celestial sovereignty was captured by the sea god, the winged Yam (Yammu), who is the enemy of Baal, the weather god<sup>129</sup>. The divine scenes of the Akarca stele may possibly reflect such a mythological scene. When divine/mythological scenes are considered together with the royal figure and a banqueting scene, perhaps they may allow a connection between the celestial sovereignty of divine beings and the continuity of the kingdom on earth.

It is possible to attribute the Akarca stele to Old Syrian culture because of the similarity in terms of style and iconography with the cult basins of Ebla, the Ishtar

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125 Matthiae 1987, 474.

126 Matthiae 1987, 447–455, fig. 2; Matthiae 1997, 404; Matthiae 2013a, 103–105, fig. 9; Matthiae 2013b, 382, fig. 206.

127 Woolley 1955, pl. LX, 14; Buchanan 1981, fig. 1189; Collon 1982b, fig. 20; Teissier 1984, figs. 476, 483; Erkanal 1993, pl. 22, V2-X/05.

128 Gibson 2004, 2-8.

129 Matthiae 1992, 172-174; 2016, 288-289.

stele and the Mardikh village stele. It is probably a product and a cult monument of northwest Syrian culture. Some suggestions can be put forward on how and in what way the stele was brought to Anatolia. There is some information about transferring god statues as war spoils in written documents dating to the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC in Anatolia. On the “Anitta tablet” from Boğazköy-Hattusha, the king is said to have brought the god Šiušummi (statue), which had previously been taken from Kanesh/Neša by Zalpuwan king Uhna, back to Neša during his campaign to Zalpuwa<sup>130</sup>. Hattushili I, the king of the Old Hittite Kingdom, organized a series of campaigns in southern and southeastern Anatolia and carried the gods of the cities (god statues) to Boğazköy-Hattusha, together with the spoils that he obtained from the cities that he destroyed Zalbar, Ulumma, Allha-Alalakh, Haššu(wa), Zippašna and Hahhu(m)<sup>131</sup>. It is known that Murshili I, succeeding Hattushili I, conquered the Syrian territories for the same purpose, proceeded to the Yamhad/Halab kingdom, and then to Babylon, and ended the First Babylonian Dynasty (1594 BC)<sup>132</sup>. He burned down the cities he had captured and took with him the rich spoils, bringing the god statues to the land of Hatti<sup>133</sup>. But on the way back to the land of Hatti he was forced to leave the god statues he received from Babylon in the land of Hana after being attacked by Hurrians living in northern Mesopotamia<sup>134</sup>. Agum-kakrime, one of the Kassite kings of Babylon, brought the statue of the god Marduk and his consort Sarpanitum, which Murshili I had taken from Babylon, back to Babylon after 24 years<sup>135</sup>. The gods received as spoils in the mentioned inscriptions were mostly interpreted as god statues. There is no evidence whether the Avanos-Akarca stele is among the god statues that the ancient Hittite kings took from the cities that they destroyed during the campaigns they carried out in northern Syria and brought to the land of the Hittites. However, the possibility that this stele, which is foreign to Anatolian cultures, may have been brought to the Anatolian soil during the above-mentioned Hittite wars, should not be overlooked. The stele was found near the Akarca village of the Avanos district in central Anatolia. If the information given by the villagers is correct, the stele fragment could have been used as a reused stone on a wall at the side of the water source. In this case it is possible that the stone came here from another place. Akarca village is located about 56 km northwest of Kültepe-Kanesh, the center of the Old Assyrian Trading Colonies in Anatolia<sup>136</sup>. It is quite striking that the stele was found in a location close to the city of Kültepe-Kanesh. It is probable that the stele may have come there from the city of Kültepe-Kanesh, considering the existence of a royal figure with a peaked cap who appears in Old Syrian colony style seals in Kültepe excavations and has commercial

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130 Neu 1974, 12-13; Alp 2000, 54.

131 Kümmel 1985, 456-463; Klengel 1992, 81-82; 2011, 33; Alp 2000, 65-66.

132 Hardy 1941, 203-205; Astour 1989, 13-14; Klengel 1992, 82; 2011, 35; Alp 2000, 59.

133 Astour 1989, 14; Klengel 2011, 35.

134 Astour 1989, 14.

135 Brinkman 1972, 281; Brinkman 1976, 97; Wilhelm 1993, 435; Klengel 1999, 63.

136 Özgüç 1986; 2005; Kulakoğlu 2011, 1012-1030.

activities with northern Syrian merchants<sup>137</sup>.

#### IV. Conclusions

Steles are stone works with figurative motifs and reliefs mostly engraved on one side, going back to the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC in ancient Near Eastern art<sup>138</sup>. Defined as narrow stone slabs with a round top that have reliefs or inscriptions over them they are erected in residential areas, temples, tombs or country borders in memory of a person, an event or to commemorate a divine power. The Avanos-Akarca stele is one of the few steles with engravings on four sides, like the Ebla steles. The stele must have been dedicated to a possibly deceased/deified king. The Avanos-Akarca stele is one of the relief figurative artworks reflecting the complex cultic actions of the Old Syrian period. The cultic/ritualistic and divine/mythological scenes engraved on each four side of the stone should shed light on a cultic act with a banquet, organized in the name of the deceased/deified king, in which the continuity of the kingdom is ensured by divine beings.

The Avanos-Akarca stele, foreign to Anatolia in terms of style and iconography, is a cult monument brought to

Anatolia from northwest Syria, perhaps from Ebla and is a product of Old Syrian culture, and it must belong to the Middle Bronze Age I and II around 1900–1750 BC.

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137 Özgüç 1968, 15; Özgüç 1986, 49; Özgüç 2005, 24-25; Klengel 1989, 263–267; Bilgiç 1992, 64-66; Peyronel 2017, 197.

138 Amiet 1980, figs. 228, 359-362, 392, 404, 444, 550-555, 728-729, 731.

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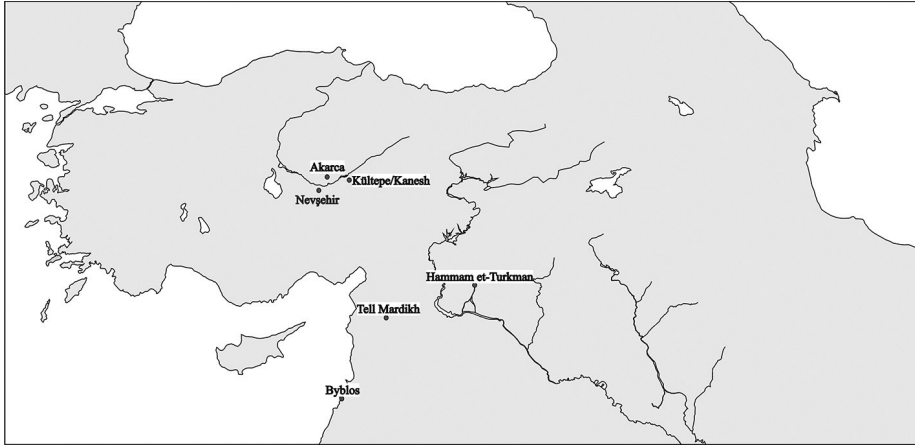


Fig. 1 Map showing cities mentioned in the text (drawn by E. Genç)



Fig. 2 Photographs showing the stone wall block where the stone with reliefs was said to be found and the place from which the stone with reliefs was removed (photographed by U. Yanar)

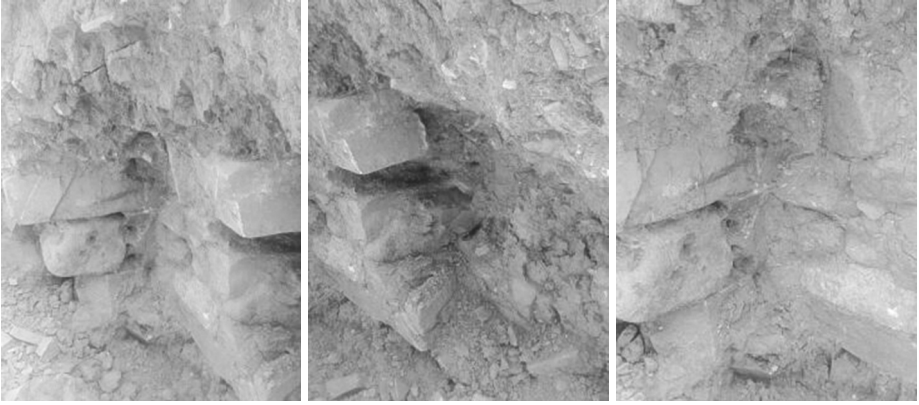


Fig. 3 Photographs showing the stone wall block where the stone with reliefs was said to be found and the place from which the stone with reliefs was removed (photographed by U. Yanar)

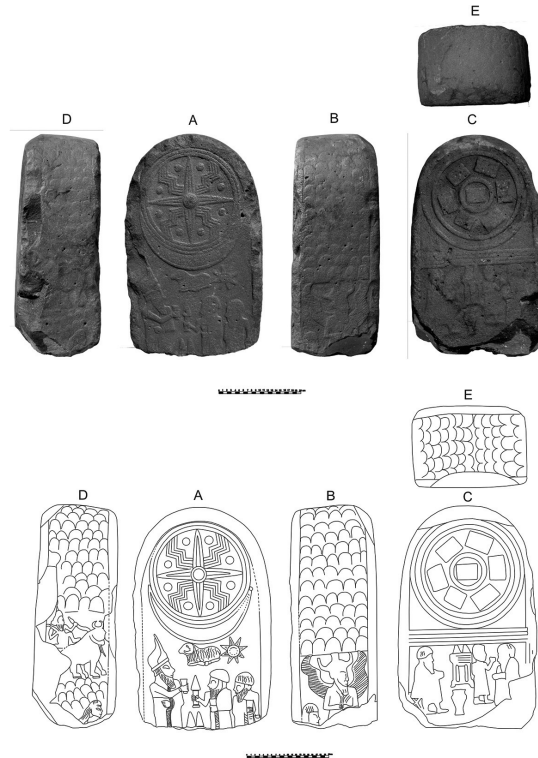
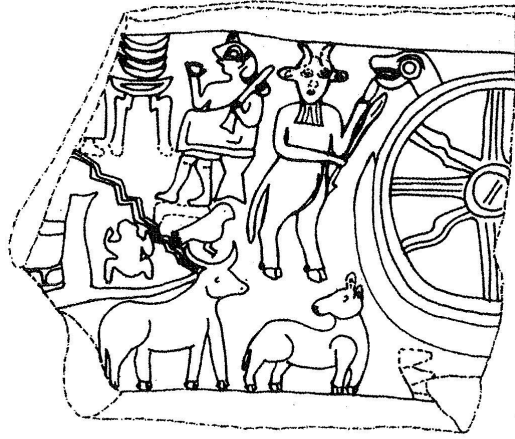


Fig. 4 The Avanos-Akarca stele and its drawing (drawn by E. Genç)



Fig. 5 The Mardikh village basalt stele fragment (Matthiae 1987, fig. 9, TM.85.S.450; 1993, pl. 69.2)



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Fig. 6 The Alseldorf stele (Di Paolo 2006, fig.1)

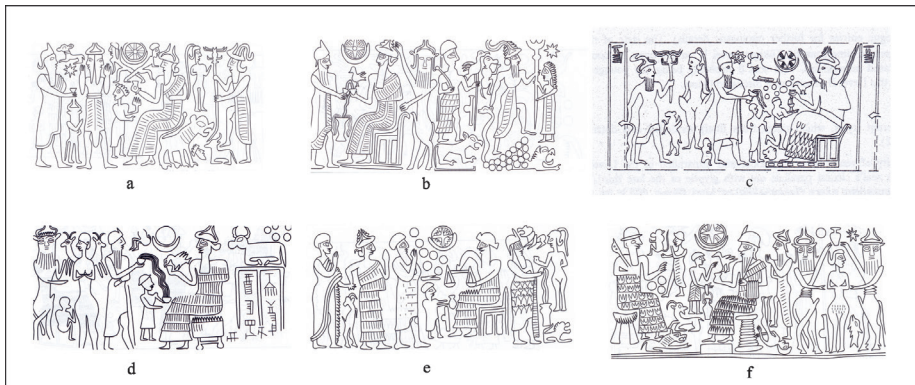


Fig. 7 Kültepe-Kanesh Karum level II, Old Syrian Colony style seal impressions ‘the ruler with the picked cap’ (a–e); ‘the deity with the picked cap’ (f) (Özgüç - Özgüç 1953, figs. 690–693; Özgüç 2006, CS 222, CS597, CS 767, CS 819 and CS 704)



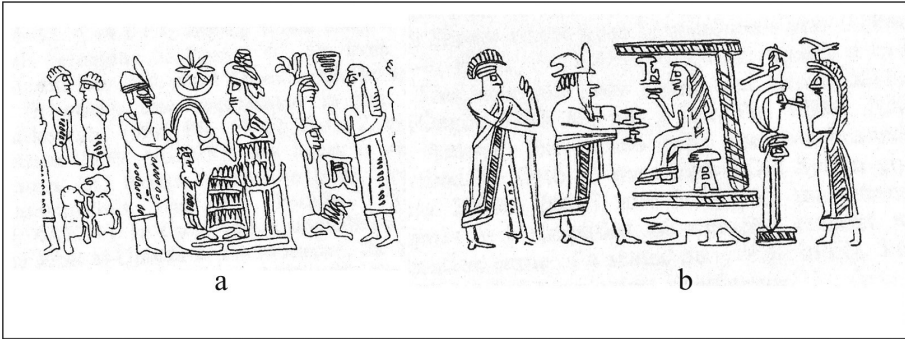


Fig. 8 Cylinder seals from Tell Hammam-et Turkman (a) (Meijer 2007, fig. 4) and Musée de Louvre (b) (Marchetti 1993, figs. 5–6)

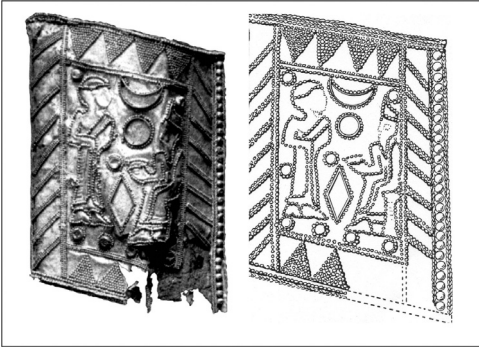


Fig. 9 Gold plaque from Byblos (Dunand 1958, pl. CXXXII; Maxwell-Hyslop 1971, fig. 75b)



Fig. 10 Ritual basin with the cultic banquet scene, limestone, form Temple D, Tell Mardikh-Ebla (Matthiae 2013b, fig. 212)





Fig. 11 Ritual basin with the cultic banquet scene, basalt, form Temple B1, Tell Mardikh-Ebla, (Matthiae 2013b, fig. 213)

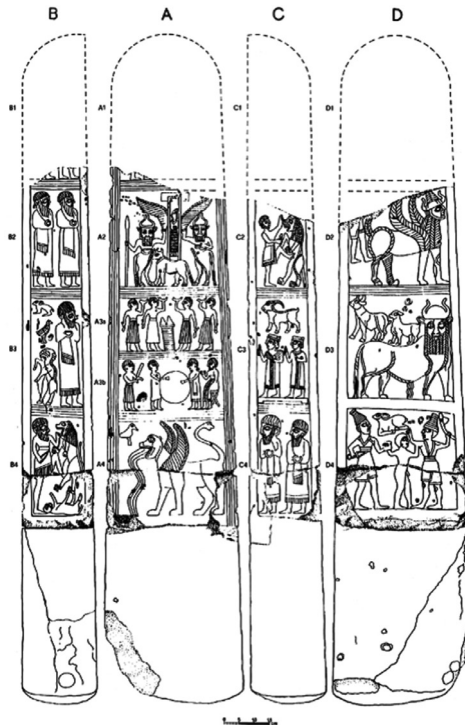


Fig. 12 Ishtar stele, from sacred area of Temple D, Tell Mardikh-Ebla (Matthiae 2013b, fig. 206)

