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A Mold from Mari and its Relations

Among the depictions on terra cotta molds found in the palace at Mari on the upper Euphrates is one which is unusual for its external relations as well as for the fact that it raises questions concerning its compositional arrangement (fig. 1).¹ This mold depicts a man leading a large stag by one of its antlers. In front of the stag a dog, probably a saluki, rears up on its hind legs. Above the back and rump of the large stag a smaller stag (or perhaps a roebuck) is seen. Both animals are portrayed in similar walking postures, and each seems to stride upon an imaginary ground line. The feet of the man and the hind feet of the dog rest upon the same invisible line as those of the large stag.

¹ See André Parrot, Mission archéologique de Mari II: le palais, documents et monuments (Paris, 1959), pl. XVIII, no. 1032 and fig. 29. This mold has the following measurements: length, 23.5 cm.; width, 19.0 cm.; depth, 7.8 cm.; thickness, 2.5 cm. Parrot considers it to be from the time of Zimrilim (1779-1761 B.C.). For further discussion, see Marie-Thérèse Barrelet, Figurines et reliefs en terre cuite de la Mésopotamie antique, I (Paris: Librairie orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1968), 84-85. Mme. Barrelet considers the group of molds including that here being discussed to date from the period of Larsa (ca. 2017-1763 B.C.): "Ces moules découverts parmi des éboulis, on ne sait à quel niveau du palais de Mari, avaient peut-être été fabriqués pour Zimrilim, ou représentaient un héritage: la vaisselle de qualité se transmet dans les grandes familles. Quoiqu'il en soit, ces moules datent probablement de l'époque de Larsa." Edith Porada considers that the

Fig. 1.

Terra cotta mold
from the palace
at Mari, room 77;
M. 1032, Aleppo.

Photograph courtesy
of Andre Parrot;
see A. Parrot,
Mission archeologique
de Mari, II: le palais,
documents et monuments
(Paris, 1959),
pl. XVIII.

The motif of a person leading a stag by the antlers reminds one of Egyptian illustrations of animals being led by the horns. The most famous of these representations is seen in the wall painting of a group of Asiatics, from the tomb of Khnumhotep at Beni Hasan, Dynasty XII (1991-1786 B.C.).² The man leading the

placement and size of the smaller animal may be due to lack of space. She discusses this object in a review of Parrot, op. cit., in the American Journal of Archaeology 65:3 (1961), 313. One should also note that another terra cotta mold of the same group shows a lion attacking a bull while smaller animals (not bovids) stride in the space above the major motif. Photographs of both molds may also be seen in André Parrot, Sumer (New York: Golden Press, 1961), 294-295.

² W. Wreszinski, Atlas für altägyptischen Kulturgeschichte (I-III, Leipzig, 1923), vol. II, Taf. 6. Animals being led by the horns are seen again in the first millennium on Phoenician ivory sculptures found at Fort Shalmaneser, Nimrud; see M. E. L. Mallowan, Nimrud and its Remains, II (London, 1966), pl. VII and figs. 443-448. One may note the various ways of leading small



stag on the mold from Mari also directs our attention towards Egyptian motifs, as his garment and hair style seem to be "Egyptianizing." We may also note that although the motif of a man leading a stag is rare in western Asia, there are precedents for such depictions in Egyptian art. A relief of Old Kingdom date from Giza (grave 27) shows a stag being urged or pushed from the rear, while a gazelle which is in front of the stag is

horses or ponies discussed by Mary Aiken Littauer, "The Figured Evidence for a Small Pony in the Ancient Near East," *Iraq* XXXIII: 1 (Spring, 1971), 24-30, in relation to the position of the man leading the stag on the Mari mold. Edith Porada has kindly reminded me that the wall paintings from Mari include a scene of a man leading a bull by a ring and tether, but also by a hand near the base of its horns; see Parrot, *Mission archéologique de Mari*, II: le palais, peintures murales (Paris: Geuthner, 1958-59), pl. V and fig. 18, p. 20, from cour 106.

Fig. 2.

Relief from the tomb of Ti,
south wall of the chapel;
Saqqara, Egypt, Dynasty V;

Georg Steindorff, Das Grab des Ti
(Leipzig, 1913), pl. 128.

Fig. 3.

Wall relief from the mastaba
of Gem-Ni-Kai (Kagemni),
Saqqara, Egypt, Dynasty VI;

Friedrich Wilhelm von Bissing,
Die Mastaba des Gem-Ni-Kai, I
(Berlin, 1905), pl. XXV.

led or pulled by its horns.³ A stag seen in a wall relief from the tomb of Ti, Dynasty V (2565-2420 B.C.), is being pulled by a man who faces the animal, while another man guides it from the rear (fig. 2).⁴ This stag is being pulled by its antler, while the man pulling it seems to have his other hand beneath the head of the animal. These methods of leading or urging the animal along suggest that the stag is here treated much like the goat, as a domesticated, or at least "manageable," animal which can be led by man.

A stag seen on a relief of Gem-ni-kai (Kagemni) of late Dynasty V or Dynasty VI⁵ is shown as a miniature representative of its species, as are caprids and bovids in offering processions in these reliefs (fig. 3). The animal is shown being led by a rope or tether around its neck. Here the animal is barely

³ Richard Lepsius, Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien, Ergänzungsband (Leipzig, 1913), pl. XXIIIc.

⁴ Georg Steindorff, Das Grab des Ti (Leipzig, 1913), pl. 128.

Fig. 2

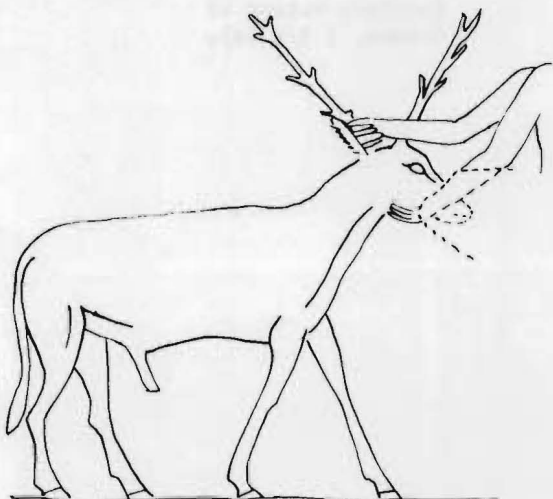
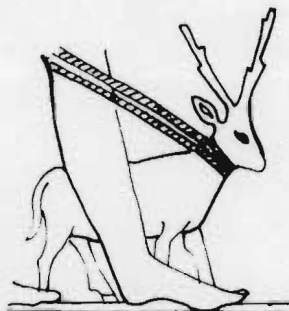


Fig. 3



higher than the knee of a man. Here, too, the concept of a deer being led by a man, among other similar depictions of animals which are domestic or normally wild, may represent Egyptian attempts to herd or domesticate a variety of cervids and caprids.⁶ The stag does not seem to occur in this type of scene in later Egyptian art; such depictions stand in contrast to the not uncommon representation of stags and deer in hunt scenes.⁷

⁵ Friedrich Wilhelm von Bissing, Die Mastaba des Gem-Ni-Kai, I (Berlin, 1905), pl. XXV; see also William S. Smith, The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1958), 78.

⁶ A. Leo Oppenheim, Ancient Mesopotamia (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 45.

⁷ See Ludwig Borchardt, Das Grabdenkmal des Königs Ša3hu-re (Leipzig, 1910-13), vol. I, pl. 17, and vol. II, 168 ff.; A. M. Blackman, Rock Tombs of Meir I-VI (London, 1914-24), vol. II (1915), pl. 8, tomb of Ukhotepe I, Dynasty XII. See also Percy E. Newberry, Beni Hasan, Part II (London, 1894), pl. IV (tomb 15). Warren R. Dawson, "Deer in Ancient Egypt," Journal of the Linnaean Society, London, 39:263 (Oct. 3, 1934), 137-145, gives a list of deer representations in Egyptian art.

Fig. 4.

Diadem of electrum, from
the Es Salhiya treasure,
Egypt, Hyksos Period (?);

Metropolitan Museum of Art,
Lila Acheson Wallace Fund, Inc.,
gift, accession no. 68.136.1;
(maximum height of
diadem, 3 3/8 in).

Egyptian relations are also visible in the style of the stags on the Mari mold. The antlers of male cervids are the most outstanding feature of the animal, and various conventions have been used to represent them in the ancient Near East. The antlers of the stags on the mold from Mari are closer in style to the Egyptian representations (and perhaps to the existing Syrian convention for this form) than to the various conventions used in Mesopotamia.⁸ The Egyptian convention for the antlers usually shows both antlers rising in an acute

⁸ The author has discussed this in her Ph. D. Dissertation, The Stag in the Ancient Near East (Columbia University, 1971), passim. For an example of the frontal schema of antlers on a Syrian or Cappadocian seal, see Edith Porada, Corpus of Ancient Near Eastern Seals (Bollingen Series XIV, Pantheon Books, 1948), no. 1083, and 152-153; see also Pierre Amiet, "La glyptique syrienne archaïque," Syria XL (1963), 74 ff. and fig. 24. The tradition of a frontal schema also exists in Iranian art; however, for our purpose, the important fact is that the motif of a person leading a stag is a tradition in Egyptian art.



"v" from the top of the animal's head, with no attention paid to the burr or coronet which occurs at the base of the antlers in the natural animal. The effect is that of a highly generalized and artificial reference to this prominent feature of male cervids.⁹

A related treatment of antlers may be seen on one of the rare three-dimensional stag images from the first half of the second millennium B.C., on the diadem from the Es Salhiya Treasure in the Metropolitan Museum (fig. 4).¹⁰ This elegant work, made of man-made electrum,¹¹ has a stag's head at the center of the front of the diadem. The diadem is thought to show

⁹ One may note that the flipped-up tails of the stags on the Mari mold are not typical of Egyptian depictions of this animal, but occur in Mesopotamian depictions of the Akkad period; see, for example, Rainer M. Boehmer, *Die Entwicklung der Glyptik während der Akkad-Zeit* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter and Co., 1965), Abb. 31, 37.

¹⁰ Henry G. Fischer, "Egyptian Art," *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (Oct. 1969), 69-70.

¹¹ I owe this information to the kindness of Nora Scott, Curator of the Egyptian Department of the Metropolitan Museum.

Asiatic influence, and has been dated tentatively to the Hyksos period (1786-1567 B.C.).¹² The ears of the stag on this diadem are more exaggerated in size and are set more vertically than on any western Asiatic works of art, a feature which is very Egyptian in spirit, as is the pattern seen inside the ears of sculptured heads of gazelles on the same diadem. These qualities may be compared with Egyptian animal representations of the First Intermediate Period and the Middle Kingdom.¹³ However, the rosettes on the diadem seem to be western Asiatic in character, as does the burr around the base of the antlers.¹⁴ One must also note that there are no related examples of three-dimensional stags from western Asia to serve as comparanda. The antlers of the stag on the diadem are placed in the typical Egyptian "V" convention;¹⁵ the treatment of the antler beams and tines is absolutely non-naturalistic, and may be compared with the artificiality of the antlers depicted on the terra cotta mold from Mari.

Concerning the placement of the two stags on the mold from Mari, the filling of empty space with animal and other motifs is common enough in ancient Near Eastern art, although the use of a "walking" animal in

¹² Fischer, loc. cit.

¹³ See for example William S. Smith, Ancient Egypt as Represented in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston (Boston, 1960), fig. 48, and especially fig. 51. The inclusive dates of the First Intermediate Period and the Middle Kingdom are 2258-1786 B.C. For Egyptian chronology see William C. Hayes, "Egypt--to End of Twentieth Dynasty," Cambridge Ancient History, vol. I, chap. VI (rev. ed., Cambridge University Press, 1962).

¹⁴ I owe this comment to Nora Scott. Edith Porada has also pointed out to me that the combination of deer and gazelle on the diadem also calls attention to the representation of wild caprids, seen as offerings, on a seal impression from Mari (that of Ana-Sin taklaku) and on seals of the former "First Syrian Group." See Parrot, Mission...monuments, 169 ff., and Porada, Corpus..., nos. 910, 931, 932.

¹⁵ The artificiality of the treatment of the antlers of the stag in Egyptian art may be seen in a New Kingdom relief as well; see Étienne Drioton, Encyclopédie photographique de l'art: le musée du Caire (Éditions "Tel," 1949), no. 152. This fragment, from the grave of Amon-her-Khepchef, Thebes, is here said to be contemporary with Tuthmosis III (1504-1450 B.C.). It has been published in Ludwig Borchardt, op. cit., 169, fig. 27, as from the grave of "Mentu-hir-hopsef," Dynasty XIX.

an otherwise empty field, and the ground line thereby implied, is not usual. Great caution must be exercised in applying modern concepts of spatiality to ancient art. One finds spatial relations in western Asiatic art occasionally implied by the use of rather naturalistic forms, ground lines, and the overlapping of forms.¹⁶ Suggested spatial relationships may play a part in the depictions of landscapes in Akkadian art, and on some seal representations of the Akkad period free-field arrangements may be seen, although in Helene Kantor's words, "...no hint of perspective, of the illusion of depth...is to be expected...."¹⁷ One does not expect such implications of space-in-depth until the Late Assyrian period, when the reliefs of Tiglath-pileser inaugurate a new spaciousness, further explored in the reliefs of Sennacherib and Assurbanipal.¹⁸ However, these do not allow us to speak of true perspective rendering. One can perhaps speak of variations in size used to suggest variations in location in Egyptian representations of Middle Kingdom date, a "remarkable effort that has never been repeated...."¹⁹ The predilection for the use of filling motifs in ancient Near Eastern art makes it less likely that the variations in size seen on the mold from

¹⁶ See for example the beautiful seal (mentioned previously) in Porada, Corpus..., no. 910, and 118-119. This seal is dated in or near the time of Hammurabi (ca. 1792-1750 B.C.). It includes various motifs, however, which are non-Babylonian, such as the Egyptianizing life sign near the hand of the deity, while the upward curve of the brim of the worshiper's cap is Syrian. Betty Schlossman has called my attention to the fact that at approximately the same period animals and composite beasts conceived as standing side-by-side are arranged one above the other in diminishing size. The question arises here, as with the Mari mold, whether this is inevitably due to compositional rather than spatial organization. See a Cappadocian seal, Porada, Corpus..., no. 893; and a bronze cup of unknown provenience (to be published by B. Schlossman).

¹⁷ Helene J. Kantor, "Landscape in Akkadian Art," Journal of Near Eastern Studies XXV:3 (July 1966), 145-152, and especially 147-149, pl. XVI: figs. 8, 9.

¹⁸ Henri Frankfort, The Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970 ed.), 168-186; also H. A. Groenewegen-Frankfort, Arrest and Movement (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1951), 174ff.

¹⁹ Groenewegen-Frankfort, op. cit., 53-54, 72-75, especially 74-75. This development is also seen in the hunting scene from the tomb of Senbi; see Blackman, Rock Tombs of Meir I (London, 1914), pl. VI.

Mari are manifestations of true spatial concern. However, the statement made by André Parrot concerning a "father-son" relationship of the two cervids on the Mari mold²⁰ is not necessarily convincing, for male deer (except for the roe) do not remain with their annual mates, nor do they fulfill a "father role" to their own offspring. Besides, the animals on the Mari mold both carry fully developed (and therefore adult) antlers.

The examination of the mold from Mari and its Egyptian relations provokes our consideration of the problem of the domestication of deer. Also to be considered in light of these concerns is the possible ritual nature of the stag. These are problems of greater scope in the ancient Near East than might be thought.²¹ Besides the examples given above from Egypt, there are depictions from Anatolia²² and from Iran²³ which suggest that deer were kept captive. We know of past and present herding and breeding of deer as evidence that these animals are susceptible to partial or actual domestication.²⁴ There is no reason to think that such practices were not available to the ancients.

Remains of deer found in various places in the ancient Near East add to our information the probability that deer were also ritual or sacrificial animals.²⁵ Aside from occasional remains which have been

²⁰ Parrot, Mission...monuments, 35, says: "Peut-être le faon qui accompagne son père prisonnier."

²¹ The author has discussed this in greater detail in her dissertation, op. cit.

²² See the Hittite relief from Alaça Hüyük which shows a stag tethered; Ekrem Akurgal, The Art of the Hittites (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1962), pl. 94. I owe to the kindness of Machteld Mellink the information that in Turkey stags, rather than female deer, may be set out as decoys.

²³ See the Sassanian reliefs from Taq-i-Bustan, which show an enclosure or park as the scene of a royal hunt in which a doe with a scarf flying from her neck acts as a "judas" or decoy; Shinji Fukai and Kiyoharu Horiuchi, Taq-i-Bustan, I (Institute of Oriental Culture, University of Tokyo, 1969), pls. LXXIX-CII.

²⁴ K. K. Flerov, Fauna of USSR: Mammals (vol. I, no. 2, Moscow-Leningrad: The Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1952; published for the National Sciences Foundation, Washington, D. C., 1960), 144.

²⁵ Edith Porada kindly supplied me with information received in a letter of March 3, 1971, from Maurits van Loon, which describes antlers embedded in clay "andirons" in a building of the late third millennium which may be a temple, at Korucutepe in

documented, the sizable quantities of remains of deer found on Cyprus occur in contexts which imply sacrifice and interment, or at least the gathering together of frontals and antlers.²⁶ In at least one case the deposit of remains is found within the limits of a sanctuary. Tentative evidence for the sacrifice of deer in an Early Iron Age context is also known from Tell Sūkās south of Ras Shamra.²⁷ These do not exhaust the repertoire of faunal remains which include deer or stags in circumstances which imply ritual usage.

Literary records also attest to the capture, herding, and sacrifice of deer, although such references are often brief and fragmentary.²⁸

The weight of this varied evidence is certainly indicative of the cultic significance of the animal in the ancient Near East, even if we cannot deduce this from the Egyptian representations. In fact,

eastern Anatolia. The circumstances of the find of an antler at Tarsus in a chalcolithic level also suggest a ritual situation; Hetty Goldman (ed.) Excavations at Gözlü Kule, Tarsus, II (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), 5, and figs. 3, 4.

²⁶ F. E. Zeuner, "Animal Remains from a Late Bronze Age Sanctuary on Cyprus, and the Problem of the Domestication of Fallow Deer," Journal of the Paleontological Society of India, vol. 3 (1958), 131-135; also, for other speculations about the domestication and ritual nature of deer on Cyprus, see H. W. Catling, "Cyprus in the Neolithic and Bronze Age Periods," Cambridge Ancient History, (rev. ed., Cambridge University Press, 1966), vol. I, chap. IX (c), "Cyprus in the Neolithic and Chalcolithic Periods," 17; also Hans-Günter Buchholz, "Birth of a Civilization," Archeologia Viva, vol. II, no. 3 (March-May 1969): Cyprus at the Dawn of Her History, 35; P. Ducos, "Le daim à Chypre aux époques préhistoriques," Report of the Department of Antiquities, Cyprus, II (1965), 1-8.

²⁷ P. J. Riis, Sūkās, I (Copenhagen, 1970), 38 and n. 95; 85 and nn. 288, 289.

²⁸ See The Assyrian Dictionary, vol. I, part 1 (Chicago: The Oriental Institute, 1964), 225, for the treaty of Esarhaddon in which the sacrifice of a deer is mentioned. See also Benno Landsberger, "Die Fauna des alten Mesopotamien nach der 14. Tafel der Serie Har.ra=hubullu," (vol. XLII, no. VI, Abhandlungen der philologisch-historisch Klasse der sächsischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Leipzig, 1934), 98. Also, see A. Leo Oppenheim, loc. cit.; Burchard Brentjes, Wildtier und Haustier im alten Orient (Band II, Lebendiges Altertum, Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1962), 37-38; also, W. Robertson Smith, The Religion of the Semites (Reprint, New York: Meridian Books, 1966), 218, 466.

to this writer's knowledge, there are no remains of deer from Egypt in contexts which imply sacrifice, nor are they among the animals seen being butchered in Egyptian reliefs.

Concerning the motif on the mold from Mari, we should not be surprised at the relationships between the art of Mari and that of Egypt,²⁹ particularly in view of the known diplomatic, cultural, and material exchanges which occurred between Syria and Middle Kingdom Egypt during this period rich in interconnections.

²⁹ See G. Posener, "Syria and Palestine ca. 2160-1780 B.C.; Relations with Egypt," Cambridge Ancient History, vol. I, chap. XXI (rev. ed., Cambridge University Press, 1965), 8ff. for the contacts between Egypt and Syria at this time. The problems of Egyptian influence upon western Asiatic arts contemporary with the Old Babylonian period are deserving of study, as noted by Edith Porada in her review of R. Opifcius (Das altbabylonische Terrakottarelie, Berlin, Walter De Gruyter, 1961) and Th. Barrelet, op. cit., in American Journal of Archaeology 73:3 (July 1969), 377.