

Image and Identity in the Ancient Near East

Papers in memoriam Pierre Amiet

edited by
Laura Battini

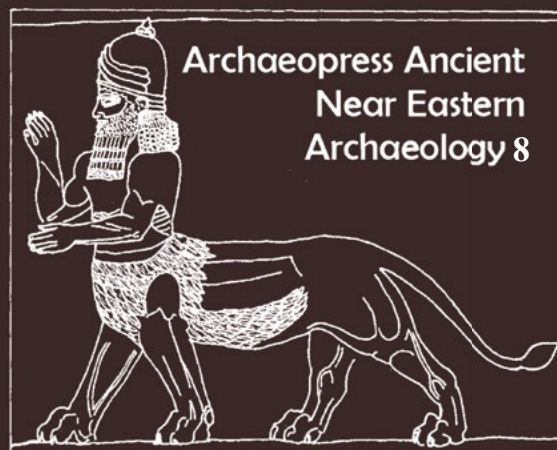


Image and Identity in the
Ancient Near East
Papers in memoriam Pierre Amiet

edited by
Laura Battini



ARCHAEOPRESS PUBLISHING LTD

Summertown Pavilion

18-24 Middle Way

Summertown

Oxford OX2 7LG

www.archaeopress.com

ISBN 978-1-80327-122-4

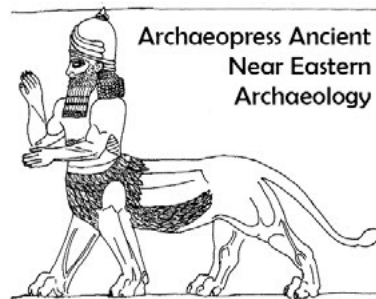
ISBN 978-1-80327-123-1 (e-Pdf)

© Archaeopress and the individual authors 2022

Cover: image Cylinder seal MNB 1947, Louvre Museum, © Laura Battini

The text of the inscription reads:

'O Marduk, great lord, god full of mercy, for your servant who reveres you, look upon me, that I may be filled with life'



All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the copyright owners. This book is available direct from Archaeopress or from our website www.archaeopress.com

Contents

Introduction	iii
Première Partie : <i>Persona</i> et le corps	
'Personae' and Human Images. 'Different Bodies' and the Power of Visual Communication	1
Rita Dolce	
Corps ou persona ? L'enfant à l'époque néo-assyrienne	11
Laura Battini	
Real Human Bodies, Images of Bodies and the Time Factor in the Early Cultures of Mesopotamia and Syria.....	27
Rita Dolce	
The Cultural Construction of the Gendered Body in Ancient Near Eastern Studies: A Historiographical Approach	38
Agnès Garcia-Ventura	
Validating the Imprinting through Presence and Properties in Old Babylonian Period.....	48
Silvana Di Paolo	
Souvenir de Pierre Amiet.....	55
Rita Dolce	
Altérations corporelles en Anatolie hittite	56
Alice Mouton	
As-tu vu celui dont le corps est abandonné dans le désert ? Je l'ai vu, son <i>etemmu</i> ne se repose pas aux Enfers. Le devenir du corps par-delà la mort en Mésopotamie	65
V. Van der Stede	
Deuxième Partie : Les autres pistes de recherche	
Aux origines du premier urbanisme: approche méthodologique des conditions de sa naissance.....	79
Jean-Claude Margueron	
The Arc of the Horn Part I: Ibexes as Icons of Cultural Imperative in Early Iranian Glyptic.....	94
Margaret Cool Root	
Couleurs et lumière sur les statues mésopotamiennes	101
Astrid Nunn	
Les orfèvres dans les sources écrites néo-assyriennes.....	115
Pierre Villard	
Reprise de motifs akkadiens en Assyrie : de la porte « habitée » à l'arbre de vie	125
Laura Battini	

Introduction

C'est avec une grande tristesse et une profonde émotion que je relie ces lignes au moment où une autre grande figure et mémoire de l'archéologie proche-orientale vient de disparaître: Agnès Spycket. Requiescat in pace

Ce volume à la mémoire de Pierre Amiet (29/04/1922-22/04/2021) rassemble les communications de deux colloques –l'un en son honneur tenu à Lyon en 2016 et l'autre tenu à Paris en 2017¹, les deux retardés par le surmenage des participants– ainsi que des articles de collègues qui ont souhaité lui dédier un ultime hommage.

Il est sûr que la nouvelle de sa mort a profondément attristé tous ses collègues, puisqu'avec Pierre disparaît non seulement un grand savant, spécialiste de glyptique et doué d'une connaissance profonde du Proche-Orient ancien, mais aussi l'une des dernières mémoires de l'archéologie et assyriologie du XXe siècle. Pierre Amiet avait côtoyé Georges Contenau, René Dussaud, Charles Fossey, Edouard Dhorme, Henri de Genouillac, Jean-Vincent Scheil, François Thureau-Dangin. Un peu plus tard, Samuel Noah Kramer, André Parrot, René Labat, ainsi que beaucoup de collègues plus jeunes venus du monde entier étudier les documents matériels conservés au Musée du Louvre. Le souhait le plus grand est que ce volume permette la poursuite d'un dialogue avec les écrits de Pierre Amiet, autant par la rigueur de ses analyses que par la poursuite de ses thèmes de prédilection. Car les images, entendues à la fois comme objet portant une iconographie et idées sous-tendues par cette dernière, sont un domaine aussi vaste que complexe. Il n'est pas étonnant qu'il reste encore insuffisamment exploité avec la profondeur d'analyses nécessaire.

¹ Le premier colloque, organisé par Laura Battini, s'intitulait : *Persona : The Power of Human Images in the Ancient Near East*. Il s'est déroulé à Lyon les 4 et 5 Novembre 2016 et avait rassemblé une dizaine de chercheurs et collègues européens. (<https://www.archeorient.mom.fr/recherche-et-activites/rencontres-scientifiques/Persona-The-power-of-Human-Images-in-the-Ancient-Near-East>). Je tiens à remercier la Maison de l'Orient, où le colloque s'est déroulé. Le second colloque, organisé par Laura Battini et Isabelle Langlois, s'intitulait : *Bodies in stone and clay: perception and images of living beings in Mesopotamia/ Corps de pierre et d'argile : perception et images des êtres vivants dans la Mésopotamie des IIe et Ier mill. av. J.-C.* Il s'est déroulé à Paris, les 9 et 10 Novembre 2017 et avait rassemblé plus d'une douzaine de spécialistes du Proche-Orient (<https://www.college-de-france.fr/site/dominique-charpin/symposium-2017-2018.htm>). De même, tous mes remerciements vont au Collège de France, spécialement à Thomas Römer, Administrateur du Collège de France et Directeur de l'UMR 7192 et Dominique Charpin, à l'époque vice-directeur de la même équipe.

Le volume se compose de deux parties. La première concerne le corps et l'identité, la deuxième des articles liés plus directement à la recherche de Pierre Amiet.

Les études de la **première partie** analysent le corps en tant qu'entité biologique autant qu'identité (*persona*) sociale, sexuelle et culturelle. L'intérêt pour le corps comme sujet de recherche en sciences humaines s'est accru au cours des années 1980 et 1990, surtout chez les sociologues, les anthropologues et les archéologues, en lien avec les études du genre. Le corps devient ainsi un objet d'étude complexe, lié à l'identité personnelle autant qu'à la société. D'un autre côté, les théories cognitives modernes ont permis de comprendre les différences entre l'image et l'écrit, la première saisissable de manière immédiate et globale puisque tous les éléments de l'image sont perçus au même moment ; le deuxième discernable plus lentement et de manière successive. Cette fruition plus immédiate et globale des images en fait le véhicule privilégié du pouvoir politique et religieux pour la transmission de messages spécifiques réalisés par les artistes. Enfin, les neurosciences ont aidé les chercheurs en sciences humaines à comprendre les fonctions du cerveau qui touchent la vision et les émotions. Aujourd'hui, on pense que la vision d'un objet suscite des émotions conscientes et inconscientes à la fois, les premières localisées dans le néocortex et les secondes dans l'amygdale. D'autre part, les études neuroscientifiques mettent en évidence une influence sociétale et personnelle outre que biologique de la compréhension des images. Ainsi, selon les théories contemporaines, plus intense est l'émotion causée par une image, plus le cerveau a du mal à s'en défaire. Les effets psychologiques des images ne font plus de doute.

Les articles de cette première partie montrent ainsi le pouvoir émotionnel des images, les moyens et les supports utilisés pour arriver à cette force de suggestion, les différents publics qui sont le destinataire privilégié des différents types de production. Ils investiguent aussi les émotions comme elles sont exprimées à travers les gestes et les attitudes des personnages représentés.

Dans le premier article, *Rita Dolce* réfléchit sur les moyens, les intentions et les nuances mis en place

par la communication visuelle au Proche-Orient ancien pour obtenir différents impacts médiatiques et s'adresser à différents publics. L'image, en effet, bien que pouvant parler avec immédiateté à tous, n'est pas en soi un moyen de communication simple. Elle est dotée d'un appareil de « signes » qui stimulent la perception émotionnelle avant celle rationnelle et qui, par sa nature, peut investir différents niveaux de perception, de compréhension et de valeur sémantique. On explique ainsi pourquoi une image est directement capturée au niveau émotionnel dans son ensemble mais n'est pas immédiatement comprise dans l'intégralité de ses signaux. Rita Dolce s'intéresse ainsi d'un côté aux individus et aux détails spécifiques de représentation qui révèlent leur valeur identitaire ; et de l'autre aux vaincus, où le corps torturé, mutilé, tué renvoie à une identité spécifique (*persona* en latin) niée. Tous montrent le pouvoir multiforme de la communication visuelle.

Laura Battini considère les corps juvéniles à l'époque néo-assyrienne. Car, loin d'être un thème peu développé, l'enfance a été longuement traitée par Sennacherib et Assurbanipal et en partie par Tiglat-phalazar III. L'analyse de leurs bas-reliefs permet d'un côté de comprendre des critères autres que la taille qui siègent à la caractérisation de cette phase de la vie humaine qui va de la naissance à l'adolescence. Et de l'autre, à mieux comprendre les liens complexes entre famille, société, genre et âge. Si le garçon est un mi-homme et la petite fille une mi-femme puisqu'ils portent les mêmes vêtements et couvre-chefs que les adultes et que seule leur taille est plus petite, l'enfant est tout de même très important comme le démontrent les allusions textuelles et le fait que surtout à l'époque néo-assyrienne il est très souvent représenté. Chez Sennacheib les différences d'âge sont rendues par la taille, les attitudes et quelques gestes. Chez Assurbanipal, qui fait adopter une taille unique pour les enfants dans son palais Nord de Ninive, ce sont surtout les attitudes qui suggèrent des différences d'âge. Enfin, une étude attentive des bas-reliefs rend compte de liens familiaux compliqués par le sexe et l'âge des enfants et par le rôle social plus (femme) ou moins important (homme) des parents.

Le deuxième article de Rita Dolce reprend la personne vue comme corps altéré par l'âge. La représentation du corps vieilli n'est pas fréquente, probablement parce que la communication visuelle s'intéresse à fixer un état, un acte, une condition de l'individu ou de la collectivité, plutôt qu'à caractériser les aspects réels des corps physiques. En Mésopotamie, les images des mêmes sujets humains représentés à des âges biologiques manifestement différents sont rares et en partie controversées. En revanche, il existe des images de personnes d'âges différents pour les deux sexes, bien que les femmes âgées soient moins fréquentes que

les hommes. La plupart des images de ces derniers ne se focalisent pas explicitement sur les modifications biologiques des corps humains, sauf dans quelques cas qui sont discutés dans l'article. De même, les caractérisations des différents âges de la vie humaine, dont certaines sont marquées par des « rites de passage », ne font pas l'objet d'une attention particulière dans les représentations mésopotamiennes, exception faite pour la naissance et l'enfance. La vieillesse, considérée dans les sources textuelles comme l'époque de la sagesse, n'est pas montrée dans les images, tout comme la fin de vie, sauf dans le cas de contextes de guerre et dans ces cas elle est largement représentée avec l'intention spécifique de communiquer des valeurs et des significations particulières.

Agnes Garcia-Ventura réfléchit à la genèse de certaines interprétations genrées du corps proposées dans les études contemporaines sur des documents iconographiques du Proche-Orient ancien. En partant de deux exemples, aujourd'hui identifiés avec des figures masculines mais ayant été interprétés au moment de leur découverte comme des figures féminines, le but de l'article n'est pas d'étudier comment les images de ces corps furent entendues dans le passé. L'objectif est en revanche de comprendre comment les assyriologues ont interprété les identités sexuées au fil du temps. Cette approche aide à mieux comprendre la construction du corps genré dans les études du Proche-Orient ancien, non seulement au début du XXe siècle après JC, mais aussi aujourd'hui.

L'article de Silvana Di Paolo traite l'individualité (*persona* en latin) d'un point de vue historique comme une réalité sociale, basée sur des identités relationnelles. Dans le Proche-Orient ancien, le sceau est un moyen de validation documentaire et un marqueur de la personnalité, il a donc un rôle performatif. Par le biais de l'empreinte, chaque sceau personnel semble transmettre des propriétés inhérentes à l'objet puisque c'est une action traçable et que son propriétaire est présent. Le sceau peut donc être considéré *lato sensu* comme « la personne elle-même », jusqu'après la mort de son propriétaire, car *sigillum manet*. L'article explore le lien entre *persona* et les artefacts, en concentrant l'attention sur le corps comme lieu de l'expérience intégrée dans le monde matériel.

Alice Mouton s'intéresse aux altérations du corps en Anatolie hittite. Comme en toute société traditionnelle, en Anatolie tout ce que le corps d'un individu affiche est très significatif. Les altérations corporelles peuvent être superficielles et temporaires, telles qu'un changement de vêtements, ou plus drastiques et durables, telles que les mauvais traitements corporels et les marques corporelles. Chacune d'elle est accomplie à un moment précis : à l'occasion d'un rite de passage, d'un rituel de

purification, durant un événement culturel, comme une punition ou même une malédiction. Il symbolise ainsi le changement d'état d'une personne (d'impur à pur) ou d'une catégorie/état social(e) (célibataire/marié ; libre/vaincu). Ainsi, les transformations physiques du corps biologique deviennent l'expression d'une identité sociale changée.

Le dernier article de la première partie est une étude fort intéressante sur la matérialité du corps décomposé et sur les problèmes d'identité liés à la mort du corps. *Véronique van der Stede* montre qu'en Mésopotamie la mort ne signifiait pas l'anéantissement total de la personne humaine mais plutôt la dissociation de l'*etemmu* (« esprit ») et du corps biologique (*šalamtu* ou *pagru*). Pour conserver ce dernier, les Mésopotamiens avaient trouvé des techniques d'une durée temporaire, probablement jusqu'au jour des funérailles et des rites connexes. En se basant sur les sources textuelles et archéologiques, plusieurs techniques de conservation temporaire ont pu être identifiées : ébouillanter le corps, le sécher ou fumer au moyen d'une source de chaleur, le conserver dans du sel, l'embaumer au miel, le parfumer à l'huile et au parfum... Une fois la toilette du mort terminée, le corps était exposé, pleuré et mis en terre. Tous ces rituels s'entendent pour un cadavre préservé entier : l'intégrité du corps est essentielle pour maintenir l'individualité du mort, puisqu'un corps mutilé ou partiellement conservé n'étant plus capable de définir l'individu signe la disparition éternelle de ce dernier, comme s'il n'avait jamais existé.

La **deuxième partie** comprend des articles en lien plus strict avec les thèmes affrontés par Pierre Amiet. Deux articles traitent de son thème privilégié de recherche, la glyptique, avec deux approches différentes mais autant originales (Cool Root et Battini). Un article reprend le problème de la formation de l'État (Margueron), que Pierre Amiet avait traité dans plusieurs de ses études glyptiques. De même, la formation et l'organisation des artisans (Villard) et la statuaire (Nunn) restent dans les préoccupations d'Amiet.

L'article de *Jean-Claude Margueron* s'intéresse à l'émergence de la ville au Proche-Orient ancien. La ville appartenant à la géographie par son installation dans l'espace, à l'histoire par sa durée et à l'archéologie par ses restes, l'approche proposée est ainsi triple, en s'appuyant sur les méthodes propres à ces trois disciplines. Il en ressort une vision complexe de la ville : en architecture de terre, dans un milieu où l'humidité reste un danger, la ville ne pouvait se développer qu'en inventant une technologie globale adaptée. C'est ainsi qu'on peut expliquer la forme des sites : la forme conique, très fréquente, favorise l'écoulement de l'eau et son élimination vers la périphérie du site ; la forme rectangulaire est pensée pour les mêmes raisons avec une ligne de crête médiane et une longitudinale

assurant l'écoulement de l'eau vers les longs côtés. Autre solution technique pour empêcher l'eau d'attaquer la base des murs de tout type de bâtiment est l'infrastructure compartimentée, un maillage de murs de fondations en chaînage continu, entre lesquels on a accumulé un matériau absorbant (terre sèche, cendres, graviers, tessons concassés...).

L'article de *Margaret Cool Root* invite à réfléchir à l'intérêt d'une catégorisation archéologique trop stricte et à la repenser en termes plus fluides. L'exemple du bouquetin, ici étudié, est exemplaire : animal sauvage, domestique et exotique à la fois, souvent représenté dans la glyptique iranienne de la préhistoire tardive à l'empire perse achéménide, il a été perçu d'une manière fluctuante selon les époques. Ces changements sont porteurs de changements culturels spécifiques : l'image renvoie à une idéologie précise et à un contexte social précis. Le bouquetin devient ainsi un animal spécial dans le monde iranien, occupant une place liminale entre nature et spiritualité humaine.

Après avoir démontré récemment (Nunn et Piening 2020) que les statues mésopotamiennes étaient peintes, *Astrid Nunn* s'intéresse ici à leur emplacement pour comprendre comment leurs couleurs étaient rehaussées ou limitées par l'éclairage naturel. Au III^e millénaire BC, les statues n'étaient pas exposées dans les cours, mais restaient dans des pièces à la lumière tamisée. À partir du II^e millénaire BC, certaines statues divines sont mises dans les cours des temples, exposées ainsi à la lumière vive du soleil brûlant et à l'ombre que ce dernier produit. Cela induit une réorientation des façades du temple, ainsi que des cours et des cellae vers l'est. Ces changements trouvent raison dans une nouvelle valorisation de la lumière du soleil levant, surtout appréciée par les élites religieuses et royales.

L'article de *Pierre Villard* est consacré aux orfèvres néo-assyriens (*šarrāpu*). Si les connaissances archéologiques et techniques ont été enrichies par la découverte des tombes royales sous le palais NO de Nimrud, il restait encore à étudier les origines, le statut social, l'organisation des orfèvres et les pratiques de leur travail. De cette analyse originale, il en ressort une organisation du travail très structurée : les orfèvres travaillaient dans le cadre de corporations familiales, impliquant des règles et usages précis, ainsi qu'une certaine solidarité entre ses membres. Ces guildes étaient intégrées dans les « Grandes Organisations » (temples et palais) ou les maisons de personnalités de haut rang, ce qui leur permettait d'avoir les matériaux précieux indispensables à leur travail. Cela n'empêchait pas les orfèvres d'exécuter des commandes en dehors de la « maison » à laquelle ils appartenaient. Les orfèvres bénéficiaient d'un niveau socio-économique relativement élevé : ils possédaient des habitations urbaines et des domaines ruraux ; ils étaient les

témoins dans divers achats immobiliers effectués par d'importants dignitaires ; et leur éducation comprenait parfois les disciplines traditionnelles de l'érudition ; ils exerçaient aussi des fonctions administratives locales (*hazannu*).

L'article de *Laura Battini* montre la complexité de la glyptique et la nécessité d'études ponctuelles et profondes. L'épiphanie divine, l'apparition du dieu à la porte de son temple, donc au moment de sa puissance maximale (Battini 2017), est un thème développé dans la glyptique surtout aux époques akkadienne et néo-assyrienne, quand il est adapté à la nouvelle idéologie

impériale. Sont ici étudiés 75 sceaux-cylindres qui montrent d'un côté la fortune de ce thème et de l'autre la complexité des sceaux-cylindres où l'imagerie n'est qu'une partie de l'objet sceau (cf. A. Wisti Lassen 2017- ; cf. le projet Assyronline: <https://cdli.ucla.edu/projects/seals/seals.html>). Dimensions, pierres, couleurs et inscriptions gravées en positif révèlent que l'une des fonctions de ces sceaux-cylindres, au moins à l'époque néo-assyrienne, était apotropaïque. Enfin, cette analyse permet de commencer l'étude des influences akkadiennes dans l'art néo-assyrien (ou plutôt sargonide), thème complexe, riche de nuances et de significations idéologiques.

Première Partie : *Persona* et le corps

'Personae' and Human Images. 'Different Bodies' and the Power of Visual Communication

Rita Dolce

Università degli Studi RomaTre

Introduction

I wish to devote a few words to the term 'personae' mentioned in the title before embarking upon some reflections on the forms and intentions of visual communication in the representation of human beings, and the nuances, that can be perceived with a view to the communicative impact of visual languages, regardless of the audience. The latter is a fascinating issue and one that is constantly debated, as we shall mention below.

The term 'Persona' has its roots in the classical West and the Greek word *prosopon* meaning 'mask' (Filitz 2018) the quintessence of the actor who becomes a character. In Etruscan the word *phersu* has the same meaning and derives from the Greek; this may be the origin of the Latin term *persona*.

The original cultural sphere is thus that connected to drama (without delving further into the later philosophical and anthropological meanings, and others of different type).

We thus see an interesting point of contact between the etymology of the word *ab origine* and the meaning of person as a representation of the human being through one of the principal means of communication, visual media, in the cultures under discussion here.

A second consideration concerns the evaluation of the impact of images compared to writing. The former are rightly considered more universal and in some ways more immediate,¹ though they do not seem to me to be simpler. Rather, images are a form of communication that uses other signs, in the sphere of emotional prior to rational perception.

In other words, I mean to say that although the image is more immediate than writing in its reception (on the part of the viewer), by its very nature it may contain several levels of perception, understanding and semantic meaning. These levels are competing, but silent, they need to be brought out, and as such are less explicit than writing, even taking into consideration

the variations in partiality, emphasis and so on of which the written sources are full.

Even in perception, the first act that triggers communication between what is depicted and the viewer, the image is immediately grasped on the emotional level as a whole, whilst this is not true in an immediate way of all its different signals.

The level on which I wish to develop my paper concerns the power of visual communication to deal with human beings differently in their identity as 'individuals' and in their dignity, celebrated or denigrated, in a pairing that is in my opinion indissoluble.

For my own research, the field of war narratives in the form of images has been a fertile observatory for this purpose as well; on this occasion I recall the well-founded observation by Bahrani that in the Sumerian foundation myths the art of war is listed among the MEs of civilization (Bahrani 2008: 9-10). Here too we find the identity-forming heritage leading to the status of 'citizens' and the recognizable belonging of an individual to a given group rather than others, in an alternation of supremacy and power that punctuates the political history of the Near East, recurring features in the discourse on war in the visual communication.

The examination of the theme of conflict is thus predominant, though not exclusive, in the considerations that I wish to propose here, among the many that are possible, and that also draw on data published in studies by various scholars² and my own research on visual communication. These considerations concern case studies from different chronological and cultural contexts, and that I have outlined in preliminary form in accordance with two fields of observation. The first concerns specific details of the representations of human beings that reveal the identity of *that* individual; the other, concerns the power of visual communication to portraying human

¹ I thank Laura Battini for our fruitful discussions on the subject.

² I recall here only some of the monographic studies and collective works that outline a framework for different aspects and relations of the state of war and provide suggestions for advancing future research, from Oded 1992, Hamblin 2006, Bahrani 2008 and the critical examination of this work by Asher-Greve 2015, to Abrahami and Battini 2008, Battini 2016 up to the analyses from the viewpoint of society and religion in the wider Mediterranean in O'Brien and Boatright 2013 and Ulanowski 2016.



Figure 1. Nineveh, North Palace. Ashurbanipal at the hunt. Detail of the pectoral (from Fales and Postgate 1992: fig.27)

beings in situations or in possible relationships with one another that imply a specific condition.

Representation of individuals

Starting *in medias res* with the Neo-Assyrian Period, among the significant and simultaneously meaningful details I recall Albenda's recent remarks (Albenda 2014) on the numerous representations, in the patterns of the valuable fabrics of the garments worn by Ashurbanipal in the reliefs from his North Palace at Nineveh, of the design of a breast ornament—a pectoral with the tree of life or sacred tree,³ surmounted by the winged sun disk flanked by royal figures (Figure 1).⁴

It has been observed that this specific feature appears already with the founder of the Neo-Assyrian empire, Ashurnasirpal II, in the majestic throne room, precisely behind the royal throne and along the wall opposite the main entrance to the room (Figure 2);⁵ I would add that it appears here in all its visual and ideological complexity. The considerations that I proposed twenty years ago on the reliefs of the North West Palace, where the idea and the actual form of the Palace take on the connotations of a supreme synthesis where the sacred sphere is inscribed within the physical and ideal ambit of Assyrian royalty and also that the composition with geniuses and the sacred tree is the essence, the projection of Ashurnasirpal

II's kingship and that through the compenetration of the mythical and symbolic world of the geniuses, the sovereign attains the very essence of divinity to the point becoming transfigured from a primary actor to protagonist of the Sacred (Dolce 1997: 143, 152-153), combined with Albenda's correct observation that the design on Ashurbanipal's pectoral is the mark of the historical continuity of Assyrian royalty in the divine sphere (Albenda 2014: 153), present at least at the two extremes of the empire's lifespan, in the 9th and the 7th centuries BC.

A second example that I would like to mention on this occasion in the context of significant and meaningful details concerns a detail of the compositional and narrative sequence showing the killing of Tammartu in the presence of his father Teumman, in the choral depiction of the 'battle to end all battles' in the South West Palace of Nineveh: Tammartu is annihilated by a mace blow to the head and is then decapitated; his headless body lies above that of his still living father. The peremptory sequence of these actions, fixed in the images of the epic event at Til-Tuba and its most important enemy protagonists, tells us that (in specific cases such as this) the mace blow dealt to the head of the vanquished could be followed by decapitation and that therefore the smiting procedure was not necessarily the final act, despite its lethal nature; but in which cases? Was this a practice reserved for prominent figures in the scene ('personae') or not? And under what circumstances? Since we do not have other equally explicit images in the sequence of actions, I will simply note that here the power of visual communication contains an additional emotional charge, aimed at transmitting to the 'outside world' the annihilation of Teumman in his two 'personae': that of the cowardly king who attempts to flee and will later be decapitated in disgrace; and that of the father who is an eye-witness to the decapitation of his son.

³ Albenda 2014: 153 reports between inverted commas the two definitions and interpretations of the tree, which has been the object of study for a long time with a variety of different conclusions, and calls attention to its presence in the pectoral design.

⁴ The detail of the sovereign and the pectoral that he wears are most clearly legible in the bibliography provided by Albenda and particularly in Fales, Postgate 1992: fig. 27.

⁵ Meuszyński 1981: 22-23, Pls. 2/1, B-13, 2/1, B-23 for the original drawings; Dolce 1997: 147-149, Plts. 2, 5, 6, also including a scale model of room B and of part of the surrounding palatial spaces, and their reliefs, executed for the exhibition 'Dai Palazzi Assiri' organized by myself at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome in 1995, on the Neo-Assyrian reliefs present in Italy and in the Vatican Museums.

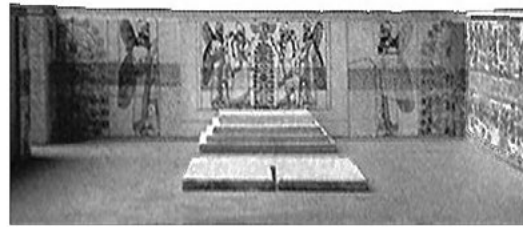
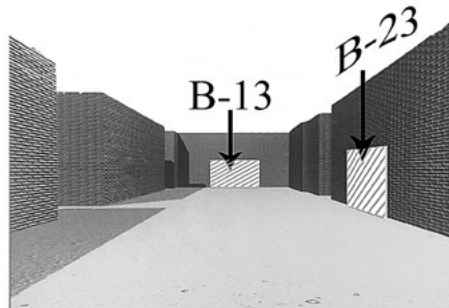


Figure 2. Nimrud, North-West Palace of Ashurnasirpal II. Detail of the main entrance to the throne room and relief on the opposite wall (photos from Dolce 1997: pls. 5 and 6; original drawings from Meuszyński 1981: pls. 2/1, B-13, B-23).



B-13



B-23

The multiform power of visual communication, to which I referred at the start, given the multiplicity of levels of perception, understanding and semantic meaning that it may contain, reveals itself in the images where human beings are found in specific conditions and in potential relation to one another.

In this context I would like to mention the Corpus of wooden carvings from Mature/ Classic Early Syrian Ebla (2nd half of the 3rd mill. BC). The figurative programme and ideological perspective of these works prevalently features a mythical and epic world of heroes and in my opinion the exhibition of kingship consolidated in its secular dimension rather than in the divine sphere; the latter is absent or in any case unidentifiable in the fragmentary but varied documentation of wooden carvings.

Based on my most recent research (Dolce 2018), taken all together this Ebla documentation appears to be a sort of manifesto of a founding epic of Eblaite kingship and its subsequent effects of stability and prosperity in times to come, constructed on subjects hitherto unknown to us in Eblaite figurative culture, like duelling heroes (Figure 3); and on the sovereign himself, portrayed differently in the actions that identify him with respect to those of the Royal Palace sealings (Figure 4), and therefore likely differently conceived in the Corpus of wooden carvings, where he appears with his royal insignia, and perhaps together with the male and female elite of the kingdom.

I have deduced that we are dealing with the remains of a different visual and ideological construction of the narrative of identity and legitimation of power, in this advanced phase of the kingdom of the Mature/ Classic Early Syrian Period to which the Corpus belongs, when the class of high-ranking functionaries enjoyed increasing prestige, married into the royal family and

were responsible for a broad range of the kingdom's policies (Archi 2010; Biga 2010; Dolce 2014a: 202-203).

Defeated

There is much to say on the pairing identity/dignity celebrated or denigrated: I will limit myself to a few considerations arising from the study under way.

Bodies humiliated

In his paper on Ethnicity at the time of the Assyrian and Achaemenid empires Frye aims to discuss those features that 'determined an identity of people, whether cultural, linguistic and /or religious' and not of 'minorities' (Frye 2005: 120-122).

I take this opportunity to note simply that the condition of minority is a focal point for the self-awareness of



Figure 3. Ebla, Royal Palace G. Heroes fighting one another and with lions on wooden carvings (from Dolce 2014e: fig.6 a; Dolce 2018: fig.5).

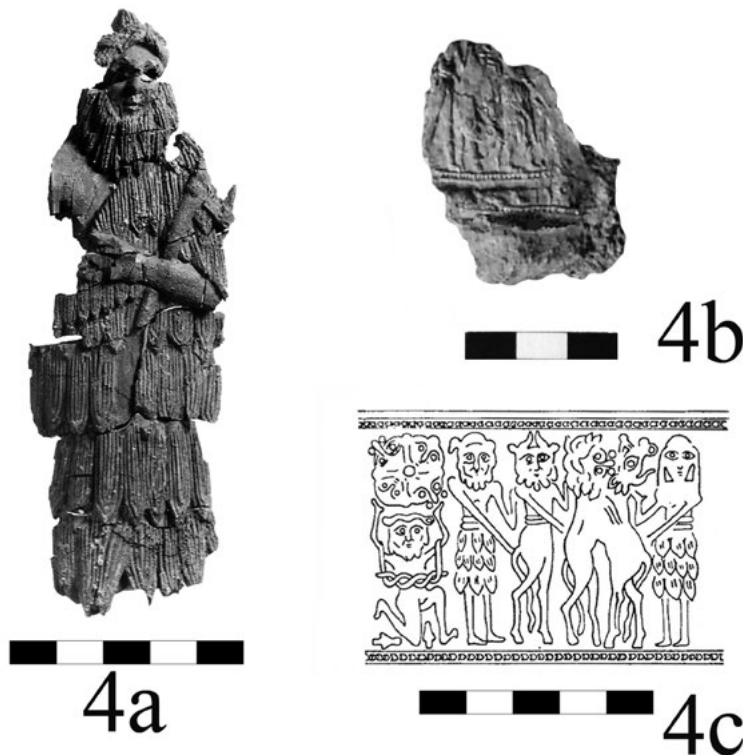


Figure 4. Ebla, Royal Palace G. (a) The king of Ebla as shown on wooden carvings (from Dolce 2014e: fig 5b); (b) fragment of *cretula* with seal impression with the king hugging a bullman, TM.75.G.581 (from Dolce 2014d: fig.7a); (c) line drawing reconstruction of a seal impression with the royal couple, TM.75.G.588 (from Archi 1995: fig. p.136 d).

the identity of groups, and is dynamic in its meaning where the losers (regardless of their numbers) virtually become ‘minorities’, humiliated in various ways on the grounds of their current status: from the individuals deported and incorporated into the Neo-Assyrian empire and integrated at various levels into the ranks of the army, recognizable in the images and documented in the written sources,⁶ with the consequent loss of identity, loss of the social unit to which they originally belonged but the integrity of their physical bodies; to the individual ‘personae’ subjected to evident humiliation and derision in their living body like the high official impaled and depicted with the mark of his rank- his headgear hanging- in the scene of the siege of Lachish, or the Elamite king Teumman who flees the heat of battle protected by his son.⁷

Humiliation is not just inflicted on human beings in contexts of war, of course (and this is true of both images and written sources); but the preponderance of the theme of war which has been the subject of debate for so long is a fruitful field of observation; this is a media operation within power politics that raises the question of whether the direct observers were indeed selected but various, from one’s own high-ranking subjects to faithful allies and uncertain allies; or whether the echoes of power in the images found an audience among certain and presumed enemies, potential or

already imminent. I will not go into detail here on the key question of who the spectators and witnesses to the pictorial narrative in the Palaces of the Assyrian Period were, fairly recently tackled by Bagg⁸ which leaves the issue still open given the numerous unanswerable questions; however, this question remains the fulcrum of a much broader issue that concerns monuments of various types and belonging to different cultures in the Ancient Near East.

As concerns the latter consideration, a fruitful observation point lies in those images that conclude the figurative and ‘narrative’ apparatus on some statues from different areas, cultures and historical periods; these are the naked and tangled bodies of defeated enemies that crowd onto the bases of statues of the victor and lie at his feet, or more accurately beneath his feet. Most, but not all, are anonymous.

Anonymous bodies versus identified bodies

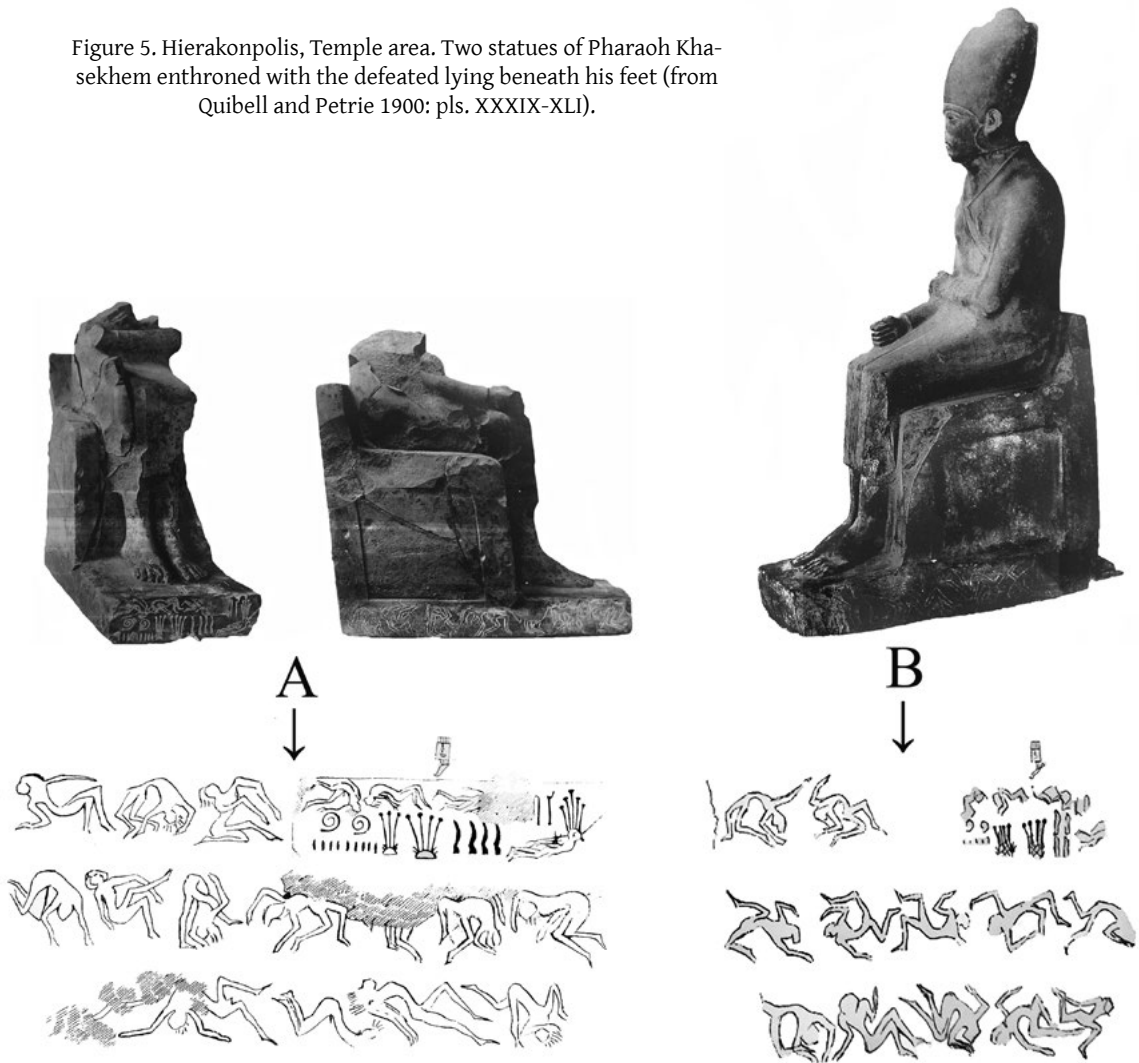
This general distinction provides us with an ‘a priori key’ to interpretation and is paradigmatic for grasping the multiform quality of visual communication and its tools: in the first case (more frequent), anonymity

⁶ On the treatment of foreign soldiers cf. Nadali 2005, an issue already alluded to in Nadali 2001-2003: 56-57; see already Oded 1979 for one of the first researches on the status of deportees in the Neo-Assyrian Empire.

⁷ See Dolce 2014b: 249-250, fig. 12 for both these conditions suffered by the important defeated enemy.

⁸ Bagg 2016: 62, 65-66 and note 37, especially; the general variables considered crucial for the degree of accessibility to viewing the pictorial ‘narrative’ concern the dimensional scale and location of the depictions, alongside the extent of penetration of light into the palace interiors. On the basis of an analytical study of the numerous factors concurring to create a situation that remains elusive in defining the impact of images on potential viewers I disagree with the A. on the fact that the main purpose of the Neo-Assyrian palatial reliefs was a ‘decorative’ one, *ibidem*: 66.

Figure 5. Hierakonpolis, Temple area. Two statues of Pharaoh Kha-sekhem enthroned with the defeated lying beneath his feet (from Quibell and Petrie 1900: pls. XXXIX-XLI).



enhances the loss of identity on the part of the vanquished; in the latter, the identification of the defeated by their inscribed names is, by contrast, a way of emphasising the supremacy of the victor over illustrious 'personae'.

I wish to note briefly the fact that in the figurative documentation of Mesopotamia from Akkad onwards, and in the later evidence from Syria and Anatolia of the 2nd millennium BC in various artistic genres, and not just on official works,⁹ the system of relations between the individual succumbing and the victor identified as the king trampling upon the defeated (often identified as the rival of equal rank) and who in some cases finishes him off with a mace blow to the head,¹⁰ has a

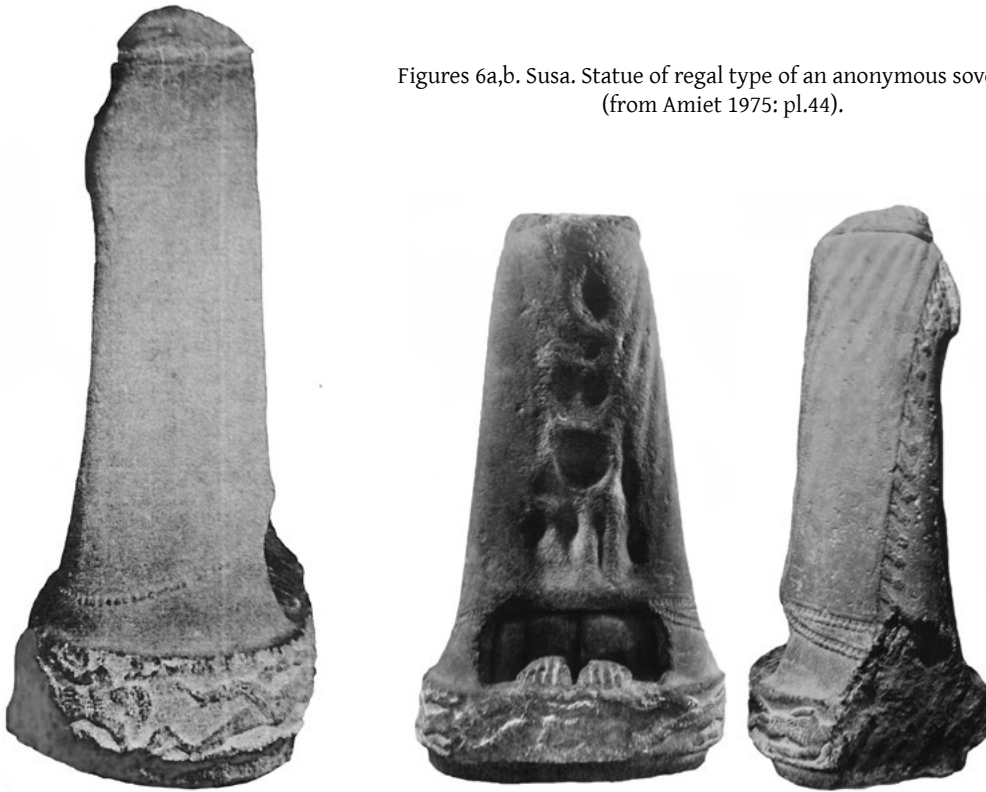
catalyzing effect of enormous efficacy and may have led to the same formulation of the defeated trampled by the king replicated and adapted in the statues of individual sovereigns or those presumed to be such.

Before discussing some of these instances, however, it is important to note that naked and intact bodies, lying in disarray, appear, for example, at the feet of the pharaoh of the 2nd dynasty Kha-sekhem seated on his throne in two inscribed statues found among the ruins of the ancient temple of Hierakonpolis (Figure 5).¹¹ This image thus seems to have been a topos already in the official Egyptian documentation of the 3rd millennium BC, in formulations and associations, such as the statues of the victor with the naked and tangled vanquished at his feet, similar to those present on the bases of Mesopotamian statues from Akkad to Ur III Periods and provides further food for thought on the origins and dissemination of this type of image.

⁹ For the occurrences of the classic scheme cf. recently Di Paolo 2016: especially 33-34 and passim; Di Paolo 2008: 347 and ff.; Mazzoni 1986: 74 and ff.; for the beginnings in Syro-Hittite art of 'narrations' of events of war and the peculiar features that single them out see Mazzoni 2005 and references.

¹⁰ I note that the sequence of the two actions of annihilation of the enemy differs from that recalled above for the end of the Elamite prince Tammaritu, in the relief depicting the battle of Til-Tuba; for the introduction of this different way of annihilating the enemy see Di Paolo 2008: 348.

¹¹ Quibell, Petrie 1900: 5, 11, pl. XXXIX-XLI; inscriptions on both statues give the name of the pharaoh, a member of the II dynasty, dating to the first half of the 3rd mill. BC.



Figures 6a,b. Susa. Statue of regal type of an anonymous sovereign (from Amiet 1975: pl.44).

An exemplary instance is the famous anonymous statue of regal type from Susa ascribed to a king of Akkad (Amiet 1976: 20-21, pl. 15) (Figure 6a, b), or to an Elamite sovereign of the period of the 3rd dynasty of Ur.¹² On this statue of the last quarter of the 3rd millennium BC, the lifeless human beings beneath the feet of the presumed sovereign are not anonymous bodies; each bears his own name and title.¹³ This fact, given the direct connection between inscriptions and images, as well as stressing the success of the victor over an illustrious rival, as noted earlier, emphasises the individual identity of the enemy in the transmission of events; this is less common, even considering some figurative programmes featuring the deeds of the Neo-Assyrian empire accompanied by inscriptions and legends.¹⁴

In the course of the XXI century BC, the images of the vanquished at the feet of the victorious king find a formulation that is again readapted in the royal statuary in forms that are not explicitly aggressive, for example in the tributaries kneeling at the feet of the

ensi Ur-Ningirsu (Figure 7),¹⁵ though the relationship established between these figures and the king in the image aims to celebrate the act of tribute rather than the capitulation of the defeated. Is this a feature specific to the dynasty of Lagash, related to the meaning of victory, that aims at the hoped-for long-term impact of the success obtained rather than at the contingent power of coercion? Or is this a change in emphasis that affects the visual representation of the period of Ur III more generally?

In this context, a valuable resource is C. Suter's analytical study (Suter 2010) of the visual representation of the kings of Ur III, based largely on data from the written sources of the period transmitted by the scribes of later periods: many statues are known only thanks to the texts that have survived in their Old-Babylonian copies. Among these I would recall the statues at Nippur of the king Shu-Sin of Ur, accompanied on their pedestals by inscriptions commemorating victorious military campaigns and images of the enslaved prisoners and the protagonists identified by the respective legends (Suter 2010: 330).

It thus seems that the 'different bodies' of enemies on the bases of statues, physically or metaphorically squashed beneath the feet of the victor,¹⁶ are powerful vehicles of a prevalent image, long lasting and widely

¹² Puzur-Inshushinak? based on a study of the garments, the typology of the base and the names and stylistic features of the signs: cf. Tallon 1993: 104, 108.

¹³ On the considerations regarding the inscriptions placed on the four lifeless human beings cf. Tallon 1993: 108 and the controversial opinions of scholars reported there.

¹⁴ From Sennacherib to Ashurbanipal; first and fundamental studies on the Neo-Assyrian military campaigns are those by Winter, between the 1980s and 90s, now collected with the majority of her studies in two volumes: Winter 2010: chapters 1 and 2, and that by P. Matthiae 1988.

¹⁵ Tallon 1993: 105 describes the tributaries as defeated enemies.

¹⁶ Or perhaps in some cases led away in chains according to Suter 2010: 346.



Figure 7. Tello. Statue of the ensi Ur-Ningirsu (from Moortgat 1969: pls. 175 and 176; Orthmann 1975: pl. 62a).

disseminated in both Egypt and the Ancient Near East from the 3rd millennium BC. However, in my opinion we should not underestimate the evidence for a different approach in the economy of victory apparent in the royal statuary of the 2nd dynasty of Lagash.¹⁷

The persistence of this formulation in the period of Hammurapi as well is attested by the terracotta plaque from Kish, an example of a 'minor art' that likely reflects the trends in the refined arts of the period;¹⁸ however, it is worth noting that here the triumphant king advances over heaps of 'different bodies' of enemies with their arms bound behind their heads and simultaneously dominates ideally over other defeated enemies who lie prone with their arms bound behind their backs, at the bottom of the scene. This is a mixture of *topoi* and a clearly deliberate reference to the more ancient display

of enemies led away in chains, from the glyptics of the Protohistorical Period onwards.¹⁹

Spoils of defeated

I will end with some remarks starting from a consideration advanced years ago by Nadali in the reappraisal of works that I have reconsidered on many occasions, the inlaid panels on war /victory themes and that allow me to introduce a more general issue. Among these works, comparable in terms of theme, artistic genre and cultural- historical period, including the panels from Kish, Mari, Ebla and the standard from Ur, it can be seen that the soldiers of Mari and Ebla hold the pole of their lances over their shoulders; hanging from the tip are garments: these are naturally clothes taken from the enemy.

They belong both to the prisoners paraded naked, and to those who, also naked, are executed by the soldiers from Ebla who again display the garments on their lances. All these garments are recognizable as trophies, displayed on the weapons of the victors, whilst it is hard to say with certainty whether in these scenes they are garments taken from still living²⁰ or already killed enemies.

¹⁷ The peculiarity or otherwise of the representation on the base of the statue of the ensi of Lagash remains an open question given the virtual absence of documentation on existing statues attributable to the period from Ur III to the early centuries of the II mill. BC; starting from the inscriptions on the statue bases and the theme that we can suggest for the depictions placed on the lost statues, the best parallels might in fact be with the Akkadian royal evidence, according to Suter 2010: 330, on the basis of the repertoire in Börker- Klähn 1982 (nn. 18-27).

¹⁸ As noted by Di Paolo 2008: 348-349, fig. 2b as a variant of the representation, common at the time, of the king squashing the enemy; and again Di Paolo 2016: 34. New considerations on the phenomenon in this 'minor art' can be found in the detailed analysis by L. Battini of another terracotta artefact, recently reanalysed and interpreted: Battini 2015.

¹⁹ See Dolce 2014b, Dolce 2014c, *passim* for this major figurative convention in the visual communication of the Near East on the theme of war and its variants over about four millennia.

²⁰ Nadali 2007: 346, note 30, tentatively advances this hypothesis.



Figure 8. Ebla. Royal Palace G. A prisoner carries clothes escorted by an Eblaite soldier. Detail from the 'victory panel' (from Dolce 2014d: fig.14d).

The fact that on the Ebla panel a prisoner escorted by the victor carries clothes similar to those hung from the lances of the soldiers (Figure 8) (Nadali 2007: note

30), may in my opinion be indicative, at least in some cases, of the selective nature of the exhibition of what at this point we can call 'spoils of the enemy': but of which enemy?

If the prisoner himself carries his own spoils this would be a condition different from that attested on several occasions both at Ebla and at Mari; this may not be an 'ordinary' prisoner; or alternatively it may be a prisoner forced to transport the spoils of another defeated or killed enemy and that will be subjected to a treatment different from the customary one. This possibility calls to mind, despite the differences and at a distance of almost two millennia, a system of display employed in the Neo-Assyrian Period in the images and written sources, of enormous communicative impact, in which the faithful allies of the defeated king were forced by the victors to parade, carrying not garments seized as a trophy but the most 'spectacular' and coveted part of the physical body of his ally, the severed head suspended around their necks (cf. Dolce 2014c: 54).

A further remark concerning spoils in this sense is that, as far as I am aware, the repertoire of images of war over about three millennia from Mesopotamia, Syria and Anatolia, does not include either the accumulation or the counting of garments, even though these are symbols that cannot be neglected in the communication of conquest, exhibited in the victory parade; perhaps these trophies are the direct and lasting prerogative of the anonymous victorious soldiers, though the issue



Figure 9. Ebla. Royal Palace G. Transportation and exhibition of severed heads of the defeated by Eblaite soldiers. Detail from the 'victory panel' (from Dolce 2014c: fig.8a,b).

remains open for the peculiar instance from Ebla that I have just mentioned.

In some cases we can be certain that the spoils, in a broader sense than garments and of various types of 'goods', belonged to a dead enemy thanks to the written sources, such as the 'dépouilles' of weapons mentioned in the Archive texts from Mari,²¹ associated as a gift with the severed head of king Ishme-Addu, and therefore recognized as an identifying feature, in some way, of the prominence of this person; or like the spoils of the treacherous king of Kakmum, whose head is given as a gift to the king of Ebla together with his insignia.²²

Finally, returning to the spoils on the inlaid panels on war themes of the Early Dynastic Period, I conclude with one last reflection: whatever the destination of the garments of the vanquished, their appropriation by the soldiers on the Ebla victory panel, a recurring act as elsewhere in the ostentatious parades of the defeated, naked and bound,²³ is also associated with the transportation of severed heads (Figure 9); this circumstance is present only at Ebla in the images of the 3rd millennium BC from Syria and Mesopotamia and appears in the display of oversized severed heads, which have for some time been considered to belong to illustrious enemies.

The semantic power of images may again in this case provide the relationships between the 'personae' represented and the exemplary meaning of these garments. The spoils of the enemy brandished by the victors, an additional booty to the severed head in the work from Ebla, may allude to a customary practice in Syria and perhaps in Mesopotamia; and these spoils may take on a special importance when they belong to high-ranking individuals.

References

Abrahami, Ph. and L. Battini (eds) 2008. *Les armées du Proche-Orient ancien (IIIe-Ier millénaire av. J.-C.)*, BAR International Series 1855. Oxford: Archaeopress.
 Albenda, P. 2014. Thoughts on Some Images of King Ashurbanipal. *NABU* 4, n. 98: 153-154.
 Amiet, P. 1975. Altakkadische Rundplastik, in W. Orthmann (ed.) *Der Alte Orient*, PKG 14: 171-174. Berlin: Propyläen Verlag.
 Amiet, P. 1976. *L'art d'Agadé au Musée du Louvre*. Paris: Réunion des Musées nationaux.

Archi, A. 1995. La religione e il culto nel Periodo Protosiriano, in P. Matthiae *et alii* (eds) *Ebla. Alle origini della civiltà urbana*: 134-139. Milano: Electa.
 Archi, A. 2010. Rank at the Court of Ebla, in H. D. Baker *et alii* (eds) *Your Praise Is Sweet: A Memorial Volume for Jeremy Black from Students, Colleagues and Friends*: 1-9. London: British Institute for the Study of Iraq.
 Asher-Greve, J. 2015. Adorno to Žižek or in Search of the 'Essence of War' in Ancient Mesopotamia. *Archiv für Orientforschung* 53: 73-85.
 Bagg, A. 2016. Where is the Public? A New Look at the Brutality Scenes in Neo-Assyrian Royal Inscriptions and Art, in L. Battini (ed.) *Making Pictures of War. Realia et Imaginaria in the Iconology of the Ancient Near East*: 57-82, *Ancient Near Eastern Archaeology* 1. Oxford: Archaeopress.
 Bahrani, Z. 2008. *Rituals of War*. New York: Zone Books.
 Battini, L. 2015. Relecture de la plaquette IB1956: les fonctions des plaquettes et l'échange entre productions populaire et officielle. *Archiv für Orientforschung* 53: 67-72.
 Battini, L. (ed.) 2016. *Making Pictures of War. Realia et Imaginaria in the Iconology of the Ancient Near East*, *Ancient Near Eastern Archaeology* 1. Oxford: Archaeopress.
 Biga, M. G. 2010. War and Peace in the Kingdom of Ebla (24th Century B.C) in the First Years of Vizier Ibbi-zikir under the Reign of the Last King Išar-damu, in M. G. Biga and M. Liverani (eds) *Ana turri gimilli, Studi dedicati al Padre Werner R. Mayer, S. J. da amici e allievi*, Vicino Oriente- Quaderno V: 39-57. Roma: Dipartimento di Scienze Storiche, Archeologiche e Antropologiche dell'Antichità, Sezione Vicino Oriente.
 Börker-Klähn, J. 1982. *Alt Vorderasiatische Bildstelen und vergleichbare Felsreliefs*, BaF 4. Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern.
 Charpin, D. 1993. Un souverain éphémère en Ida-Maraš: Išme-Addu d'Ašnakkum: *MARI* 7: 165-171.
 Di Paolo, S. 2008. Some Observations on the Defeated in the Art of the Age of Hammurapi of Babylon (with Allusions, Topoi and Narrative References), in H. Kühne *et alii* (eds) *Proceedings of 4th International Congress on the Archaeology of the Ancient Near East (ICAANE), Berlin, 29 March-3 April 2004*, Freie Universität Berlin: 343-359. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
 Di Paolo, S. 2016. Visualizing War in the Old Babylonian Period: Drama and Canon, in L. Battini (ed.) *Making Pictures of War. Realia et Imaginaria in the Iconology of the Ancient Near East*, *Ancient Near Eastern Archaeology* 1: 29-36. Oxford: Archaeopress.
 Dolce, R. 1997. Dualità e Realtà Virtuale nel Palazzo di Assurnasirpal II a Nimrud, in P. Matthiae (ed.) *Studi in memoria di Henri Frankfort (1897-1954) presentati dalla scuola romana di Archeologia Orientale*, CMAO VII: 142-162. Roma: Università degli Studi di Roma 'La Sapienza'.

²¹ Charpin 1993: 171 and the relevant citations from earlier studies; on the issue of the nature of the spoils and their value emerging from some written sources see Dolce 2014c: 57, note 18.

²² Tonietti 2013: 168-170 and preceding bibliography.

²³ I refer to the frequent attestations of soldiers raising garments on their lances who escort prisoners on the numerous inlays from *Mari-Ville II*: Dolce 2014d: 201, fig. 14; Muller 2016: 20, figs. 2.12 A, B.