

## CHAPTER XIV

### M I T A N N I

Political unity does not necessarily entail a corresponding cultural or artistic unity. Particularly in the case of such a state as Mitanni with its highly diverse ethnic components, there arises the problem of whether craftsmen working within its borders were able to develop stylistic tendencies sufficiently independent to bear the name of the political entity in which they arose.

Among the states of the Second Millennium B. C. the kingdom of Mitanni was one of the most artificial and short lived. For a few centuries, from approximately 1600 to 1375 B. C., certain areas of northern Syria, centering around the Habur valley, which neither before or after enjoyed an independent political union, were welded into a single unit by a small ruling group, a dynasty of kings with Indo-European names, supported by a knightly class. Although the independence of Mitanni was only maintained by adroit manipulation of the unstable balance of power that was characteristic of the Near Eastern world in the latter part of the Second Millennium, this state was yet sometimes powerful enough to extend its influence and hegemony beyond its own frontiers. In addition to the ephemeral character of Mitanni and the well known ethnic diversity of the North Mesopotamian population, there also exists an archaeological gap to increase the difficulty of distinguishing the "Mitannian" material culture. Knowledge of the material culture of northern Mesopotamia during this period is drawn primarily from sites on the fringes of the Mitannian sphere of influence, such as Atchana on the Orontes or Nuzi in Assyria. The necessity of distinguishing and collecting Mitannian cultural elements by iconographic or

stylistic methods has led to considerably varying opinions as to the identity of Mitannian "art."

In view of such obstacles, it becomes almost a matter of wonder that any series of objects can merit the sobriquet of Mitannian. Nevertheless, Frankfort has found it possible to distinguish with certainty a group of Mitannian cylinder seals.<sup>1</sup> In addition, sites which are known to have been under Mitannian influence have yielded a characteristic class of pottery and a few small objects, as well as some unique murals, all found in levels deposited during the floruit of the Mitannian kingdom and characterized by the presence of Mitannian seals. The objects in question are decorated with plant ornaments, some of which can be linked with analogous sphragistic designs. These may, therefore, be considered without question as Mitannian. Those cases which lack parallels on the Mitannian seals are not allied with any other known style, and are apparently also products of the same Mitannian tradition. Despite the fact that the different series of objects here discussed under that heading are decorated by designs often differing widely from one another, there exists between them a number of links sufficient, in our opinion, to indicate that only the accumulation of further materials is needed to prove the existence of a consistent, unified cultural tradition in the kingdom of Mitanni.

#### MITANNIAN GLYPTIC

#### LINKS WITH SECOND SYRIAN SEALS

The most numerous Mitannian products are the cylinder seals, whose popularity is shown by their export far outside Mitanni proper. They form a distinctive subclass, intimately allied to the main stream of Syrian glyptic. In them appear features derived from the First Syrian group,<sup>2</sup> and the latest examples are coeval with the Third Syrian class.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> CS, pp. 278-283.

<sup>2</sup> CS, p. 273.

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However, it is with the Second Syrian seals that Mitannian glyptic was most intimately related, and there are no examples demonstrating this relationship more clearly than certain specimens bearing plant designs.

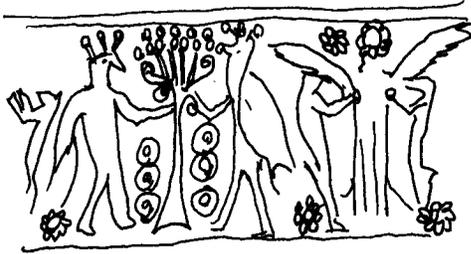


Fig. XIV. 1

In Fig. XIV.1, an incomplete sealing on a tablet in Berlin, possibly from Kirkuk, two winged and horned animals, with jackal-like bodies flank a four-quartered, winged disc. As a whole this group can be paralleled on other Mitannian seals,<sup>4</sup>

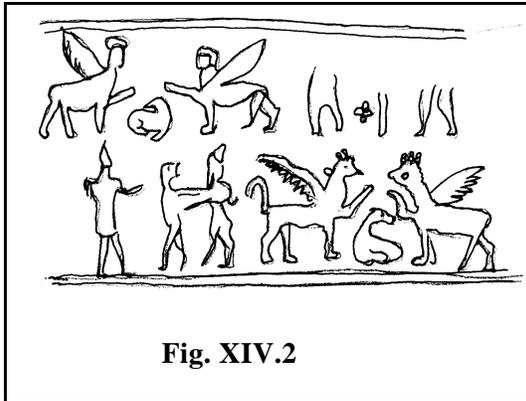
but the two inward-curling tendrils springing from the base of the sun standard are derived from forms like that appearing on the Second Syrian seal of Fig. XIII.5. In the simplified Mitannian form the shoots lack flowers and have become meaningless adjuncts to a non-vegetal standard. They do not betray any resemblance to the tendrils of the Egyptian unification symbol, and yet Fig. XIII.5 suggests that this motive was probably their ultimate source. It has already been suggested that Fig. XIII.6 had a similar origin; it is possible that this Second Syrian form, too, had a Mitannian parallel. Unfortunately the sealing on an investiture document of Assurnirari II, who reigned from 1423-1417 B. C., according to the latest evidence,<sup>5</sup> is incomplete (Fig. XIV.2).

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<sup>3</sup> Frankfurt has divided Mitannian glyptic into two groups. To the latter, the popular style, he assigns a range of 1700-1200. Amid this school, there arose during the peak of Mitannian power a more complex, "fully-grown" style, represented by only a few examples and ranging from 1500-1350 (CS, pp. 273, 218-219).

<sup>4</sup> In general proportions, the group is like that on Shaushatar's sealing which differs in details (CS, Pl. XLII, a). A closer parallel is given by an impression on a Kerkuk tablet (Contenau, *Tablettes de Kerkouk et les origines de la civilisation assyrienne* [Paris, 1926], p. 70, Fig 94 [Louvre, A07668]).

<sup>5</sup> Poebel, "The Assyrian King List from Khorsabad,," JNES, II (1943), p. 87. no. 68.



The upper register had contained a group in which two human figures flanked a shaft, alongside of which traces of rosette-like forms are visible. These may be simply the rosette filling motives common in Mitannian glyptic, but the possibility that they are really the flowering ends of hanging tendrils, as on Fig. XIII.5,

should not be ruled out, even though the attendant figures are not bullmen, but completely human.

Another design betraying the influence of the Second Syrian hybrids with inturning basal tendrils is Fig. XIV.3, an impression on a tablet from Nuzi.



Fig. XIV.3



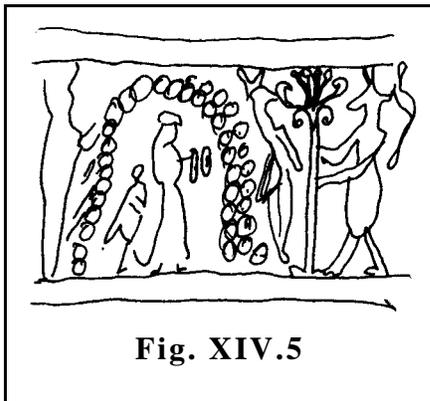
Fig. XIV.4

The composition of two winged genii supporting a sun disc is not unique in Mitannian glyptic. A fragmentary sealing in the Louvre<sup>6</sup> bears a design almost identical with Fig. XIV.3 save that the standard beneath the sun is plain while here it ends in a well-formed South-flower with narrow, pointed lobe. From the lower part of the standard of Fig. XIV.3 emerge two somewhat curving tendrils grasped by the right hands of the genii, who here take the place of the bullmen of Fig. XIII.5. That second Syrian seal is even more closely related to Fig. XIV.3 than to Fig. XIV.4.

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<sup>6</sup> L. Delaporte, *Catalogue des Cylindres Orientaux (Musée du Louvre)*, II, A, 612.

The griffin of Fig. XIII.7, who carries a staff ending in a South-flower hybrid finds some remarkable Mitannian parallels. On Fig. XIV.1 two griffins hold between them a floral standard, the top of which consists of the same elements as that of Fig. XIII.7. We have already seen that the Second Syrian griffins of Figs. XIII.7 and XIII.8 have assumed the role of the Babylonian bullmen who carry sun standards,<sup>7</sup> a group which was also copied in a more faithful manner on Fig. XIII.7 itself. Mitannian seal cutters, too, in using the motive, sometimes remained closer to their Babylonian original by retaining the bullmen, as in the pairs of Figs. XV.15 and 16.1. On a Mitannian seal found at Assur, Fig. XIV.5, there appears a single bullman, wearing a pointed cap, and holding aloft the same kind of flowering staff as in Fig. XIII.7.<sup>8</sup>



There can hardly be any doubt that the substitution of floral tops for sun standards of Figs. XIV.5 and XIV.1 and of griffins for the bullmen in Fig. XIV.1 must be interpreted as Second Syrian influence on Mitannian seals.

It was normal for Mesopotamian models to be followed more faithfully in the latter style of glyptic,<sup>9</sup>

and Mitannian deviation from Babylonian norms was often made on the basis of stimulation from the West. In addition, the priority of the Second Syrian style in the development of plant forms is particularly clear in the case of the inturning basal tendrils, where a group of four Second Syrian applications is opposed to the two simplified Mitannian specimens. The same derivative relationship can be presumed to exist between

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Ch. XIII, p. 513. For two Mitannian griffins with a plain staff between them, see Newell, 288.

<sup>8</sup> Fig. XIV. 5 shares other themes with its Second Syrian compeers. The interceding goddess, together with a dwarfed griffin, stands within an area bounded by a disintegrating guilloche band. Typically Mitannian are the twisted lion and the goat leaping up towards the staff.

<sup>9</sup> CS, p. 273.

Figs. XIII.7, XIII.8 and Figs. XIV.5 and XIV.1. The certainty of this conclusion is deepened by the fact that the Mitannian hybrids of Figs. XIV.5 and XIV.1 have undergone certain characteristic modifications which make it impossible to assume that they could be basic to the Second Syrian designs.

The South-flower hybrids of Figs. XIV.5 and XIV.1 are formed of the same elements - a small South-flower, larger volute, and palmette crown - as their Second Syrian prototype. However, both are sharply distinguished from it by the use of the drill-hole technique which was a marked characteristic of Mitannian seals, especially those of the popular class.<sup>10</sup> In Fig. XIV.5 the drill was used to produce a small dot around which curl the tips of the South-flower perianth, but more striking is the effect produced in the palmette foliage. Each obovate "leaf" has been simplified into a straight gouge, ending in a drill hole. A second row of disconnected dots serves as an additional decoration around the periphery. The crown of Fig. XIV.1 is identical save that it has a flattened top. This hybrid is much less carefully worked than XIV.5; the volutes are not sharply distinguished and the South-flower perianth has degenerated into two circles adjacent to the stalk. It is clear that the element forming such designs are not as closely related to the original Egyptian hybrid units as are the well-defined members of Fig. XIII.7. This impression of the secondary nature of Mitannian hybrids will be strengthened as more examples are examined.

#### STANDARD SPHRAGISTIC HYBRIDS

Frankfort has pointed out that the more ordinary Mitannian seals were mass-produced, with the result that many stones were decorated by repetitious recombinations of a few stereotyped motives.<sup>11</sup> Among the commonest of these was the group consisting of

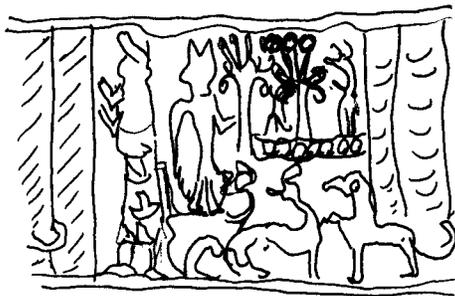
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<sup>10</sup> CS, p. 278.

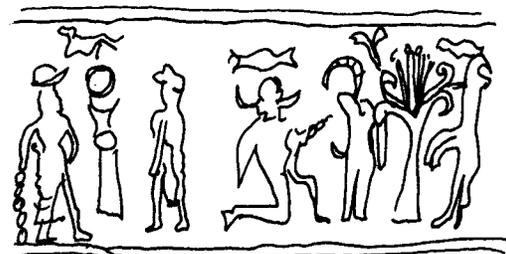
<sup>11</sup> CS, p. 280.

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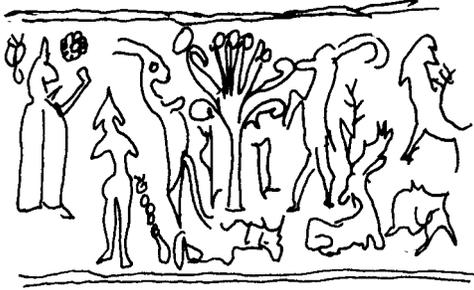
two animals, usually goats or ibex, flanking a South-flower hybrid. Such compositions illustrate the standard role played by South-flower compounds in Mitannian glyptic. Only in exceptional cases do they fulfill any other function in serving as the central axis between antithetical animals. The form of the individual hybrids was likewise extremely standardized, consisting of a single tier, without lobes, topped by palmette foliage. The floral heads on the staves of Fig. XIV.5 and XIV.1 exemplify this formula; normally the hybrid elements are attached to a trunk of varying length, almost always splayed at the base. The sharp distinction between this plain stem and the dense spreading design above bestows upon these conventional Mitannian hybrids a tree-like aspect. In this way they contrast strongly with the Second and Third Syrian classes, which can muster only three designs of arboreal character (Figs. XIII.5, XIII.6, XIII.29). All the other specimens, even though sometimes possessed of the same kind of trunk as in Mitanni (Figs XIII.1, XIII.2, XIII.3, XIII.31), have large, diffuse hybrid elements forming the main body of the pattern. Several Third Syrian examples appear with reduced or completely suppressed stems (Figs. XIII.32, XIII.30, XIII.37, possibly XIII.38). What may be termed the shrub or herbaceous character of the Syrian hybrids, which coincides with that of the Egyptian South-flower bushes, is one of the most striking characteristics distinguishing them from their Mitannian peers.



**Fig. XIV.6**



**Fig. XIV.7**

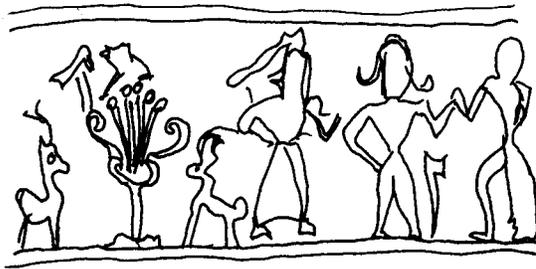


**Fig. XIV.8**

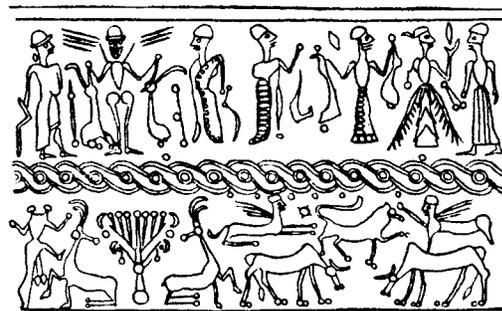


**Fig. XIV.9**

Examples of ordinary Mitannian hybrids are common. A simple type is yielded by Fig. XIV.6, a seal in the Walters Art Gallery in Baltimore. This cylinder is of mixed origin; the interceding goddess and the inscription are purely Mesopotamian, cut within the orbit of the First Dynasty of Babylon, while the remainder of the design - a misconstrued god with scimitar, two lions attacking an ibex, and the symmetrical group of rampant goats flanking the compound tree - was added by a Mitannian seal cutter. The South-flower hybrid is cut with a minimum of detail and only three crowning leaves are present. In other specimens, as on Figs. XIV.8 and XIV.9, the palmette foliage consists of four or more units. Fig. XIV.7 is peculiar in that the individual leaves adjoin and are of a solid obovate shape, instead of being formed by the usual gouge and drill hole. Sometimes the South-flower perianths of these Mitannian hybrids sustain pendant drops, as in Egypt (Figs. XIV.10,11).

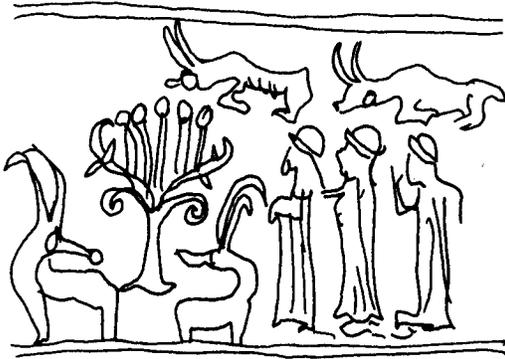


**Fig. XIV.10**



**Fig. XIV.11**

The projections hanging from the under side of the volutes in Fig.XIV.12 are probably misplaced drops. Occasionally a lobe is retained between the volutes, as in Fig.XIV.13.



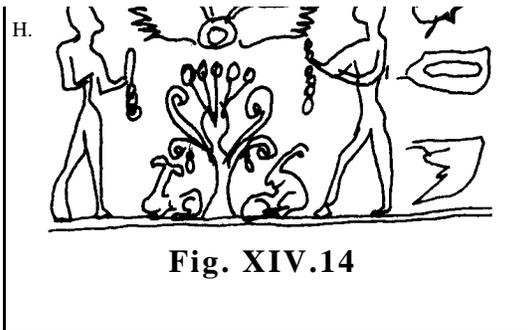
**Fig. XIV.12**



**Fig. XIV.13**

This is, like the drops, a feature ultimately derived from Egypt, and may have been introduced to Mitannian seal cutters by the intermediacy of designs such as that on the Second Syrian seal of Fig. XIII.6.

Such then is the ordinary type of Mitannian South-flower compounds. The hybrid top itself consists of the same elements as the single-tiered Second Syrian motives, and was undoubtedly borrowed from that class, as were the unusual Mitannian forms of Figs. XIV.5, XIV.1 and XIV.4. The main contribution of the Mitannian craftsmen apparent in the designs of Figs.XIV.6-13 is the mounting of this hybrid top on a trunk-like stem. Also the drill hole technique resulted in certain characteristic changes, the most prominent of which is the new form assumed by the palmette foliage. It also tended to increase the disintegration of the units inherited from Egypt.



**Fig. XIV.14**

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The South-flowers and volutes may be formed by a linear V, with ends tipped by circular drill marks (Figs.XIV.8-9,14), or meaningless features might be introduced such

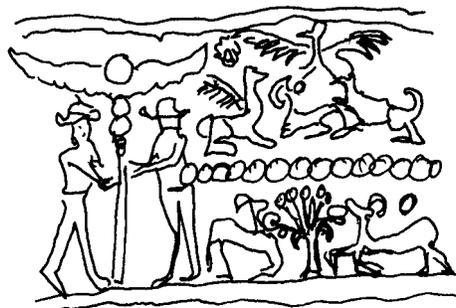
as the substitution of a small drill hole around which the ends of the South-flower curve for the well-defined spiral terminations of Second Syrian perianths (Fig. XIV.8-9,14), or the addition of an extra series of drill holes that could be added above the palmette foliage (Figs.XIV.5,XIV.1); cf. also Figs.XIV.17, XIV.19-22, XIV.24-25. Even when the Mitannians retained the incurved ends of perianth or volute, these resemble incomplete circles rather than true spiral twists.

#### ELABORATED SPHRAGISTIC HYBRIDS

Not all the Mitannian compounds were as simple as the standardized ones just described. There are a number of forms differentiated by the addition of a varying number of supplementary features. Sometimes the change is inconspicuous.



**Fig. XIV.15**



**Fig. XIV.16**

The angles between the South-flowers and volutes are filled by round holes in Fig. XIV.15 and by drops in Fig.XIV.16 and XIV.17. This angle is occupied by a flower in one second Syrian seal (Fig. XIII.1); the Third Syrian design on Fig. XIII.37 in which an elongated lobe fills the corner is a much closer analogy. However, this coincidence in a

simple feature may be accidental, especially as the other details of the two designs are different.



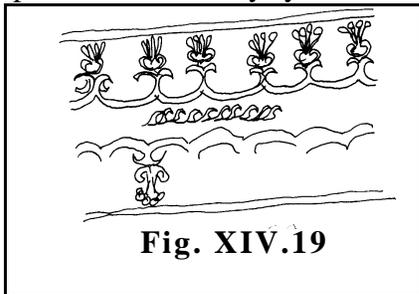
Fig. XIV.17



Fig. XIV.18

Besides Figs. XIV.15-17, Fig. XIV.18 also displays a lobe in this position, as well as drops pendant from the South-flower, the tips of which curl around drill holes. Fig. XIV.18 is distinguished by the presence of an unusual top; all the individual leaves are connected; each projects from a thick median stem. However, its most significant detail is the pair of loops projecting from the top of the volutes. This must be derived directly from Syrian prototypes. Single "drops" in this position appear on late Second Syrian seals (Figs. XIII.1, XIII.3). Moreover, the plant hybrid of the Medinet Gurob bowl bears both single and triple drops similarly placed (Fig. XII.27). The presence of this detail on Fig. XIV.18 places it alongside the Mitannian seals already cited as undoubted reflections of Syrian prototypes. The finding of Fig. XIV.18 in the second stratum at Nuzi gives it a chronological range extending from the reign of Shaushattar to that of Shamsi-Adad II of Assyria; the parallelism with the Medinet Gurob bowl proves that the seal was actually made in the final part of this range.

A cylinder in the Brett collection is covered by a unique and completely decorative pattern. Two axially symmetrical arc friezes having each point tipped by South-flower



**Fig. XIV.19**

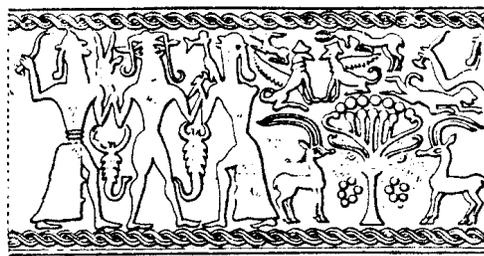
hybrids, are separated by a central guilloche band (Fig.XIV.19). There is no testimony for the use of such a composition on any other Mitannian artifact known, nor are there any traces of arc friezes on Syrian seals, which might have served as intermediaries between

Mitanni and Egypt. Since it is only from the later country that we possess evidence of the use of hypotactic arc friezes, in one case connecting South-flower hybrids (CL 86)<sup>12</sup>, it would seem the likely source of the design. However, in the absence of other data bearing on the question, the Egyptian derivation of the friezes on Fig.XIV.19 cannot be explicitly proven.

This seal is distinguished, not only for its composition, but also by the pendant elements hanging from the otherwise standardized hybrids. These unusual additions are formed by a large drill hole with a tiny narrowed "stem" emerging from the corner of the South-flower perianth. On the lower edges of the central drill hole are placed three small drills. Pendants identical, save that they possess larger stalks, appear on the hybrid, also distinguished by the presence of a second, supplementary and incomplete pair of volutes, from a cylinder in the Louvre (Fig. XIV.20).



**Fig. XIV.20**



**Fig. XIV.21**

<sup>12</sup> CL + no. = number in Typological Check List in Chapter VII.

Fig. XIV.21, a sealing from a Kirkuk tablet, displays what is possibly a very close analogy. It, too, possesses a second volute, this time complete. However, only the ends of the presumed stalks remain; the sealing is evidently somewhat abraded in the space where their hanging stems should appear. Thus, it is possible that the drill holes present are actually nothing but filling rosettes, and for this reason Fig XIV.21 cannot be cited as a certain example of the pendants found in Figs. XIV.19-20. If we remember to what changes the drill-hole technique could lead,<sup>13</sup> it becomes possible to recognize in these hanging elements, the same kind of South-flower tendrils observed in the early Third Syrian plant on the Ras Shamra seal, Fig. XIII.30. This addition forms another characteristic of plant decoration derived by the Mitannian seal cutters from Syrian glyptic. Despite the limited number of Syrian plant designs known, the popularity of various kinds of tendrils in that area has been demonstrated. In addition to the South-flower stems of Fig. XIII.30, the same hybrid also bears papyrus-tipped streamers, as does Fig. XIII.36. In the Second Syrian group South-flower tipped shoots are prominent in Figs. XIII.1, XIII.3 and XIII.5.

The Metropolitan seal, Fig. XIII.6, illustrates still another Second Syrian use of pendant stems, here tipped with small palmettes. There exists a Mitannian seal, impressed upon a document dating to the beginning of the reign of Assur-nirar II (1423 B. C.), which may have once displayed a parallel motive (Fig. XIV.2). Unfortunately all that now remains are two human figures, not bullmen as in Fig. XIII.6, preserved to the waist. On each side of the slender trunk which they flank are groups of drill holes. Here there exists the same possibility as in the case of Fig. XIV.21; these marks may be only filling motives. On the other hand, if they are the ends of pendant tendrils, they would then suggest that the motive on Fig. XIV.2 was analogous to, and possibly dependent on, Fig. XIII.6.

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Figs. XIV.26 and XIV.27 for more carefully cut versions.

Unfortunately the sealing as now defaced does not permit the drawing of any definite conclusion.



Fig. XIV.22

Of all the single-tiered Mitannian hybrids known, that of Fig. XIV.22 on a tablet from Assur, is the most elaborate. The peculiar fitting of the volute within the South-flower perianth is a deviation from the standardized Mitannian pattern.<sup>14</sup> Globular lobes fill the interstices between volute and perianth, and from the lower sides of the latter element hang both elongated, obovate agglomerations of drill holes and narrow bands, curving towards the trunk. A symmetrical pair of identical ribbons swings upward from the base of the hybrid. This plant is remarkable, not only in such details, but also for the composition in which it is placed. On other Mitannian seals, a winged sun disc may float over the hybrid (Figs. XIV.14, XIV.23-25), but only in Fig. XIV.26 is the plant supported on a rocky mountain cliff as in Fig. XIV.22.



<sup>14</sup> The upper tiers of the plants of Figs. XIII.31 and XIII.32 show in this respect some similarity, probably accidental, to Fig. XIV.22.

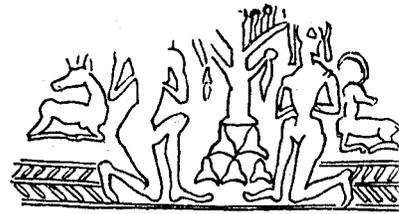
**Fig. XIV.23**

**Fig. XIV.24**

This feature must be a heritage from the south. Trees are represented growing from a peak on Akkadian seals (Figs. XVI.18, XVI.19, XVI.20), in the First Dynasty of Babylon,<sup>15</sup>



**Fig. XIV.25**



**Fig. XIV.26**

and most frequently of all on the more or less contemporary Middle Assyrian cylinders ( Figs. XVI.32, XVI.31, XVI.84). The source for the female figure to the right of the hybrid in Fig. XIV.22 is more obscure. She is the sole attendant upon it, for here, unlike the normal compositions, antithetical animals have been omitted. The action in which she is engaged is also unclear; in one hand she carries a curious tweezer-like object, while in the other she holds aloft a pinnate branch.

The meaning of her behavior may perhaps be related with the nature of the bunch-like patterns hanging from the South-flower perianth. These appear to be distinct from the decorative ribbons of Figs. XIV.19-20 which we have claimed to be derived from the South-flower tipped bands of Syrian glyptic. Such an origin is not in accordance with the explanation proposed by Helene Danthine, who considers these additions as the pendant fruit clusters of the date palm.<sup>16</sup> Although we cannot accept the validity of this claim in connection with Figs. XIV. 19-20, it can be argued with greater reason in the case of Fig. XIV.22, where the shape of the pendants, an agglomeration dependent on a tiny but

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<sup>15</sup> CS, Pl. XXVI, i.

<sup>16</sup> H. Danthine, *Le palmier-Dattier et les arbres sacrés* (Paris, 1937).

distinct narrow stem, is very different from the ribbons of the other two seals, and somewhat suggestive of natural date clusters. However, in tracing the development of the Mitannian hybrids, we have seen that they are composed of derived elements that have long lost even that amount of vegetal significance still attributed to their stylized Egyptian prototypes, and therefore the direct adoption of a feature from a naturalistic model is a procedure almost incredible in the case of the Mitannian seal cutters. If these clusters do represent date bunches, the Mitanni must have derived them from some outside tradition, the only likely source being the art of the South, where there existed precedents for the "naturalistic" representation of trees. In Akkadian times, women are engaged in gathering the date harvest: on another seal of the same period a tree with pendant clusters is placed behind a seated deity (Figs. XVI.23, XVI.24). Fruiting palms occur on Middle Assyrian seals (Figs. XVI.40, XVI.41, XVI.42). In addition, the Mari Mural, contemporary with Hammurabi of Babylon, has preserved towering, fruiting palms in the "coronation" scene (Fig. XVI.45). These show conclusively what a prominent place this motive could assume during the First Dynasty of Babylon, the period from the art of which Mitannian seal cutters derived much of their repertoire. The substitution of the woman attendant, who unfortunately remains unparalleled, for the normal Mitannian group of antithetical animals, increases the probability that the clusters of Fig. XIV.22 were borrowed from southern Mesopotamian naturalistic representations. If this is actually true, Fig. XIV.22 stands in Mitannian glyptic as a unique and isolated case in which a single naturalistic detail was grafted on the stylized hybrid formed of elements that are ultimately Egyptian.

The most unusual of the elaborated Mitannian hybrids are the many-tiered plants appearing on two examples of the fully-grown style distinguished by Frankfort.<sup>17</sup> Aside

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<sup>17</sup> CS, pp. 273-275.

from the minimal use of the drill-hole technique, a free-field composition is particularly characteristic for this small group of cylinders that testify to the highest achievements of the Mitannian seal cutters. Unfortunately, in addition to the rarity of examples of this style, only two bear plant motives.



Fig. XIV.27

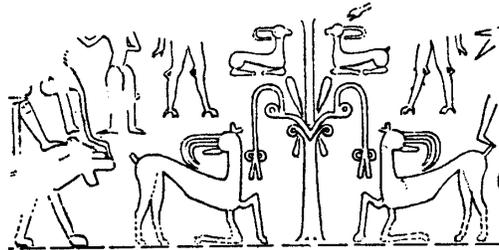


Fig. XIV.28

One is a seal in the Hermitage, known only in an old drawing of Ward's (Fig. XIV.27).<sup>18</sup> The three-tiered plant on it is so tall as to require three pairs of flanking animals for its full attendance. The only unparalleled feature - a drill hole or a bowl-like element interrupting the stem of the plant from which palmette foliage springs - may be in part due to the drawing. For the rest of the plant is a combination of various elements which occur elsewhere separately. The bands falling from the second South-flower to tie it with the lower tier, though unusual, are perhaps homologous with drops normally found in such a position.

The other, a sealing of a king of Hanigalbat (Fig. XIV.28) was impressed upon a letter filed in the imperial chancery at Boghazkoy around 1380-1280 B. C.<sup>19</sup> Unfortunately the elaborate design is incomplete, but enough remains to show that the plant had at least two tiers and that like the plant of the Hermitage seal it was flanked by more than one pair of animals. The complete design must have presented an attenuated appearance, for each tier was supported by a long stalk. The lower tier consisted of a very

<sup>18</sup> According to Frankfort, this seal is "most probably Mitannian," (CS., p. 276), though elsewhere he describes it as "Second Syrian or Mitannian" (CS, p. xlvi, figure 90). The seal's Mitanni character is evident both from the forms of the plant and its attendant fauna.

<sup>19</sup> CS, p. 274.

small South-flower perianth with drops and a larger, flattened volute, whose originally spiralforn ends have become practically complete circles, as in Figs. XIV.14, XIV.16, XIV.17, XIV.22, XIV.27. The flattening of the volutes is also prominent on more ordinary seals such as Figs. XIV.15-18, XIV.21-22, as well as in the three-tiered Fig. XIV.27. Two prominent "drops" spring upwards alongside the stem supporting the second tier. The most striking additions are, however, the long down-curving bands attached to the upper side of the volutes and ending in simple palmettes. Like the stems pendant from the underside of the perianth in Figs. XIV.19-20 and XIV.27, these ribbons possess Syrian analogies. The largest plant of the Ras Shamra bowl (Fig. XIII.36) has papyrus tipped stems hanging from the upper sides of both volute and South-flowers. Similar additions have been made to the top South-flower of Fig. XIII.30.

Although on an earlier seal, Fig. XIII.5, tendrils also hang from the top of the South-flower, not the volute, and their downward curve and palmette ends could well have served as models for Fig. XIV.27.

The appearance of two-tiered hybrids raises problems as yet insoluble. Does the distribution of single and many-tiered plants constitute a distinction between the popular and official Mitannian style? This is possible since in the large seals of the ordinary style the hybrids occupy only one half of the surface (Figs. XIV.9, XIV.11, XIV.15-17). The presence of two volutes in Figs. XIV.20 and XIV.21 is merely a minor multiplication of members within a single tier, and can hardly be construed as a transition to a many-staged pattern. On the other hand, it is possible that the introduction of many-tiered forms in Mitannian glyptic was correlated with their development in Third Syrian glyptic, and that they began at a later date than the ordinary single-tiered hybrids. Such questions await the discovery of further material for their elucidation.

#### SIMPLIFIED AND DISINTEGRATED HYBRIDS

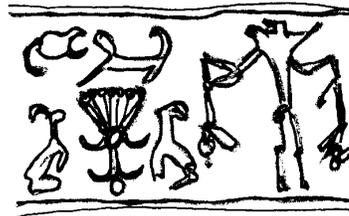
In addition to the elaborate compounds, there exists a fairly large number of atypical forms, often degenerate or simplified patterns. In some cases the standardized formula was used, but left incomplete. Thus in Figs.XIV.24 and XIV.25 the volutes are omitted; in Fig. XIV.29 they have been almost assimilated to the diffuse plant foliage.



**Fig. XIV.29**



**Fig. XIV.30**



**Fig. XIV.31**

Although the hybrid of Fig. XIV.23 still retains all essential parts and is therefore comparable to those of Figs.XIV.6-18, it is extremely coarsened. The presence of winged sun discs over the plants is a feature connecting Figs.XIV.23-25; the only other Mitannian seals on which this combination is found being Figs.XIV.14 and XIV.22. Otherwise the composition in which the simplified hybrids of Figs. XIV.23-25 and also XIV.29 are set in the ordinary scheme of antithetical animals.

Figs. XIV.30 and XIV.31 both lack normal constituents of the Mitannian hybrids. The former possesses a full top complement of South-flower perianth, volute and palmette crown, but the stem is absent. The large stalk of the latter ends only in leaves. Irregular wavy lines testify to the disintegration of the perianth and volute elements. Recognizable crowning foliage appears in Fig.XIV.31, but the remainder of the plant is atypical, being formed of a stalk with, at each end, a large drill hole from which extend short, upcurving "leaves." Here, too, belongs a seal found at Tell Duweir bearing a short stem topped only by an almost circular crown of foliage.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>20</sup> ILN, June 6, 1935, pp. 19, 37.



Fig. XIV.32



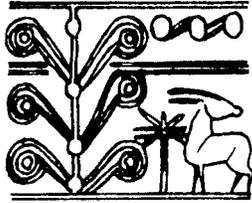
Fig. XIV.33

A very atypical hybrid serves as the central axis beside which stand two gods grasping floral-tipped streamers (Fig. XIV.32). The plant consists of two volutes interspersed with two pairs of flowering stems, and with an elongated triangular crown with a fringe at the top. Both the tendrils of the plant and the streamers held by the deities appear to end in semicircular papyrus heads, akin to those on some Second Syrian cylinders (Figs. XIII.13, XIII.14, XIII.26), but less carefully formed. Moreover, the umbels may have a small fringe, corresponding to that of the top and to those placed on the outside of the volutes. As a whole this pattern betrays no close relationship to other Mitannian forms. It is the only case at present known where papyrus umbels were used on seals of this class, and the large crowning element is unique. The volutes are, of course, a normal constituent of Mitannian hybrids, but appear here in an unusual version.<sup>21</sup> To our knowledge, there is only one other case in Mitannian glyptic in which lateral flower stems appear (Fig. XIV.33).

A distinct series of simple designs consist of forms constructed almost completely of South-flower perianths. These linear designs occur on very ordinary and simplified popular Mitannian seals. A cylinder from Nuzi (Fig. XIV.34) has a stalk with three considerably disintegrated perianths. Related examples have been found at Beth-Shan (Figs. XIV.35-37). In Fig. XIV.37 the linearization of the vegetal motive has progressed

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Fig. XVII.25.

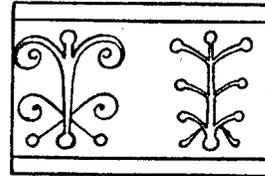
to such a degree that there is little difference between it and the spirals alongside. This motive is also noteworthy for the retention of obovate lobes and the addition at the base of a small perianth upside down.



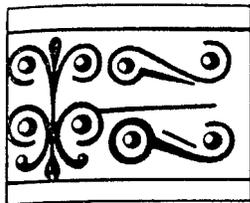
**Fig. XIV.34**



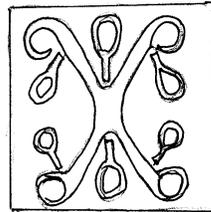
**Fig. XIV.35**



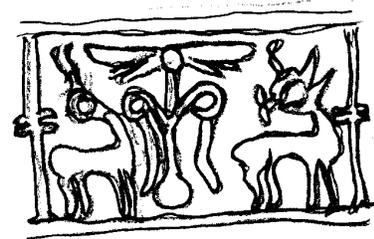
**Fig. XIV.36**



**Fig. XIV.37**



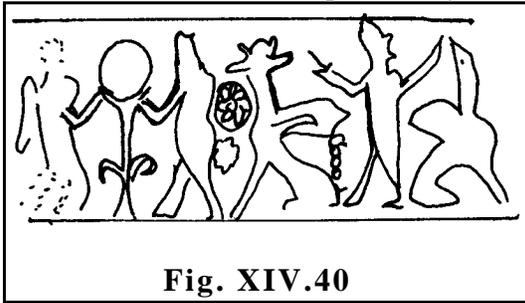
**Fig. XIV.38**



**Fig. XIV.39**

This double-headed character connects the pattern of Fig.XIV.37 with that carried out in glass on a small limestone plaque from Nuzi (Fig.XIV.38). On it two South-flowers are joined at the base to produce a kind of dumb-bell shaped pattern. In addition to the lobes, drops are also shown. To this same group belongs a seal found at Tell Duweir (Fig.XIV.39). There a South-flower with greatly elongated pendant drops is attached to the middle of a stem ending in a winged sun disc. Thus the motive appears as an extremely simplified version of compositions such as Figs. XIV.14 and XIV.23-25. The plant design on a badly damaged seal in the Louvre has not been reduced to the same geometrized curves as in the preceding cases, and is probably related to Figs.XIV.3 and XIV.4. In Fig.XIV.40 the perianths retain considerable solidity. Moreover, the plant is used in a definite setting, being flanked by two supporting (?) figures. This is in contrast with Figs.XIV.35-37 and XIV.34, where the various items are juxtaposed without being

organized into any related groups. The normal Mitannian scheme of a plant with two animal attendants is conspicuous by its absence.



**Fig. XIV.40**

As our final group of simple forms we distinguish several seals on which hybrid plant ornaments are combined with an indigenous tree or branch motive that is one of the commonest elements in the popular Mitannian seals. The motive consists of a trunk of

varying length, surmounted by short branches ending in drill holes.<sup>22</sup> When appearing with a short stem as a branch, this vegetal element may be held by a striding male god (Fig. XIV.41), or by less distinctive seated or kneeling personages;<sup>23</sup> it may be handed from one figure to another (Fig. XIV.42).<sup>24</sup> As a tree, the motive generally extends the entire height of the register; it may form the central axis between two figures, usually long-robed (Figs. XIV.43, XIV.44),<sup>25</sup> between animals,<sup>26</sup> or be set alongside other motives without being definitely related with them.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> There is at least one case, VAR, Pl. LXVIII, 572 (VA Assur 1600; yellowish frit), in which the drill holes are omitted; the trunk ends only in three plain gouges.

<sup>23</sup> CS, Pl. XLIII, e (Chatel Huyuk), j (Tepe Ghiyan). Macalister, *The Excavation of Gezer* III (London, 1912), Pl. CCII, b, 5. Bliss, *Mound of Many Cities* (London, 1894), p. 79, Fig. 127 (Tell el Hesi). VAR, Pl. ,D, 4 (VAT 8888, Assur; sealing). On A 613 (Kirkuk tablet), however, the plant appears to be long-stemmed.

<sup>24</sup> Bliss-Macalister, *Excavations in Palestine* (London, 1902), Pl. LXXXIII, 4, S (Tell es-Safi).

<sup>25</sup> Macalister, *op. cit.* III, Pl. CCXIV, 21. CS, p. 183, Fig. 43 (Nuzi); Pl. XLIII, e (Palestine). VAR, Pl. LXVIII, 568 (VA 4241; Assur; blue frit) 569 (VA 8746; yellow-green glaze; no prov.). *Ibid.*, 564 (VA 4230; Assur; yellowish-white frit) appears to show a tree held (?) by the two flanking figures. *Oriental Institute Communication* #14, p. 52, Fig. 50,d 1912 (Alishar; only one figure), A949 (Between robed figure and stag). A613 (held by nude figure facing long-robed one).

<sup>26</sup> R. W. Hamilton, "Excavations at Tell Abu Hawam," QDAP, IV (1935), Pl. XXXVIII, 407, 408. Macalister, *op. cit.* III, Pl. CCII, a, 12 (one animal only). MJ, (1929), Pl. XLII,2 (Beth Shan, one animal only). *Lachish* II (London, 1940), Pl. XXIII, B, 43.

<sup>27</sup> Macalister, *op. cit.* III, Pl. CCXIV, 11, 20. R. W. Hamilton, *op. cit.*, Pl. XXXVIII, 408 (Tell Abu Hawam). E. Grant, *Beth Shemesh* (Haverford, 1929), p. 97. Petrie, *Beth Pelet* I (London, 1930), Pl. XXIX, 274 (Tell el Fara).



Fig. XIV.41

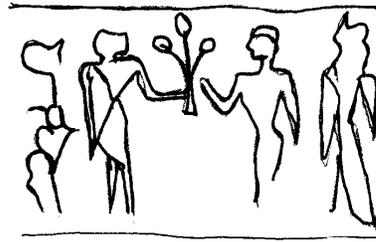


Fig. XIV.42

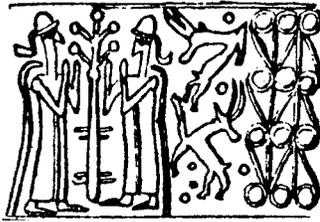


Fig. XIV.43

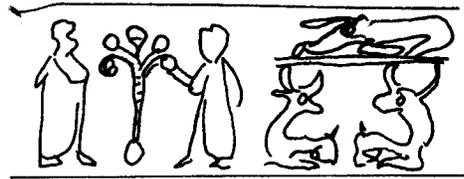


Fig. XIV.44

Often the stem is equipped with apparently meaningless horizontal lines, but despite these unrealistic additions, it gives the impression of a tree trunk. The motive is of a completely different origin than the hybrid vegetal forms hitherto discussed, and is peculiar to Mitannian glyptic; in no other class were trees reduced to such simple, formalized pattern. The only important variants of this motive are those in which it was combined with elements of the hybrid designs and the results, despite their surface mediocrity, are of great significance in the study of plant ornament. Except for two isolated Second Syrian designs (Figs. XIII.5, XIII.6), they are the first definite examples of the grafting of Egyptianizing floral elements upon arboreal trees of Asiatic derivation.<sup>28</sup> The insertion of a hybrid element is clear in Fig. XIV.6, where there is carved a male god bearing a branch, a figure comparable to that of Fig. XIV.41. However, in the Walters Gallery seal (Fig. XIV.6), the branch is no longer the simple motive of Fig. XIV.41, but has a South-flower perianth

<sup>28</sup> It is quite possible that the prominent stalks of many Mitannian hybrids are a reflection of such arboreal trunks (Figs. XIV.6-8, XIV.10, XIV.13, XIV.17-18, XIV.20, XIV.26). However it should be remembered that Syrian hybrids sometimes grow on well defined stems (Figs. XIII.1, XIII.3, XIII. 31) without appearing to be influenced by natural or arboreal models.

inserted beneath the drill-hole tipped twigs. The same kind of interpolation appears in larger tree forms; in the seals from Atchana (Fig.XIV.45) and Ras Shamra (Fig.XIV.46) the perianth has become reduced to rough downcurving elements.



Fig. XIV.45

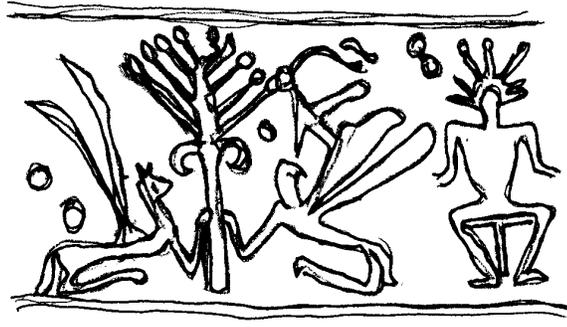


Fig. XIV.46

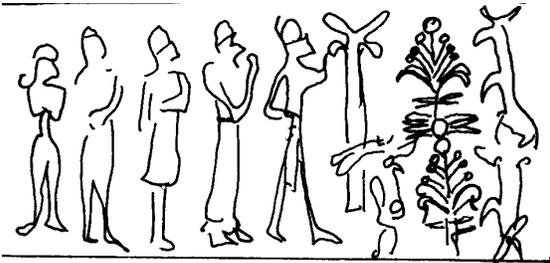


Fig. XIV.47



Fig. XIV.48

It is not quite so degenerate on a seal from OT.66 at Enkomi (Fig.XIV.47) where even the drops are preserved. The "tree" on Fig.XIV.48, from Ugarit, is related to the preceding examples cited, although here the elements curve upward. The whole motive is executed in a very hasty, careless manner. The same holds true for a tree on Fig.XIV.49, another seal from Ras Shamra. It possesses two downcurving elements, but they cannot, with certainty, be considered parts of a South-flower. This, in addition to the fact that the seal itself is not Mitannian, but possibly Third Syrian, makes a connection between Fig.XIV.49 and XIV.45 and XIV.46 improbable, despite the vague similarity existent between the tree



Fig. XIV.49



Fig. XIV.50

designs. Mention must be made of two other Mitannian "trees." The goats of Fig. XIV.50 from Atchana, rear beside a "pole" with rounded end and topped by five palmette leaves like those of Figs. XIV.7-8, XIV.15-16, and sharply distinct from the narrow, drill-hole tipped stalks of the ordinary vegetal branches. The stout-trunked tree on a Nuzi seal has a top composed chiefly of normal branches, but two shoots end in tripartite elements, presumably South-flowers (Fig. XIV.33). Aside from their unexpected presence the tree is completely naturalistic.

#### THE PLANT HYBRIDS OF THE NUZI SEALS

The second stratum of the site of Yorghan Tepe contains the greater part of the excavated remains of the Hurrian city of Nuzi. Its chronological range is well established by the discovery of a large number of tablets. The earliest of these are dated to the reign of Shaushattar of Mitanni. Sidney Smith has pointed out that this ruler could not have been a contemporary of Tuthmosis III as has been assumed. Shaushattar controlled northern Syria, Mesopotamian states, and plundered Assur. Tuthmosis III, too, was overlord of North Syrian regions and even defeated a Mitannian king, who could not have been the vigorous and powerful Shaushattar, but must have been Shuttarna I.<sup>29</sup> Shaushattar's son,

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<sup>29</sup> Sidney Smith, *Alalakh and Chronology* (London, 1940), pp. 41, 38.

Artatama I is known to have warred with Tuthmosis IV until peace was concluded and sealed by the latter's marriage to a daughter of the Mitannian king.<sup>30</sup> By means of the synchronism of Shaushattar and Amenhotep II, the rise of Nuzi may be placed approximately around 1450 B. C. The archives of at least one influential Nuzi family extend throughout three generations. The latest tablets mention the conquest of Nuzi by Ashuruballit I,<sup>31</sup> who corresponded with Akhenaten and whose reign is dated 1363-1328 B. C. on the basis of the Khorsabad king list.<sup>32</sup> The range of the second stratum of Yorghhan Tepe extends, therefore, approximately to the end of the Eighteenth Dynasty in Egypt.<sup>33</sup>

Mural paintings, broad panels of red and gray surmounted by figurative designs high on the walls decorated both private houses and the palace. Aside from vertical guilloche bands<sup>34</sup>, only in the latter building were designs preserved in any detail. They come from a passage-way in the section of the palace containing the largest, finest rooms, and therefore are presumed to be the living quarters of the ruler.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 41f.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> Poebel, *op. cit.*, p. 87, no. 73.

<sup>33</sup> Sidney Smith assigns Nuzi II an approximate range of 1450-1350 (*op. cit.*, p. 4).

<sup>34</sup> Richard Starr, *Nuzi II* (Cambridge, 1939), Plan XXIII.

<sup>35</sup> For the details of the discovery cf. Starr, *Nuzi I*, pp. 143-144 and Plan XIII. L 11 was the largest roofed room found in Nuzi and is identified as the audience chamber. This hall is connected with L 15 B by the room L 14. L 15 B, itself, is but a passage with two doorways, one leading into L 25 - the main and most sumptuous bathroom of the palace - and the other into L 15 A. The two main fragments of design were found in front of the doors to L 25 and L 15 A; Starr interprets this as an indication that the decorations assumed the form of a frieze placed high on the walls, above the doorways. It must have run continuously around the room since the fragments were evenly distributed. No objects of any importance were found in L 15 B.

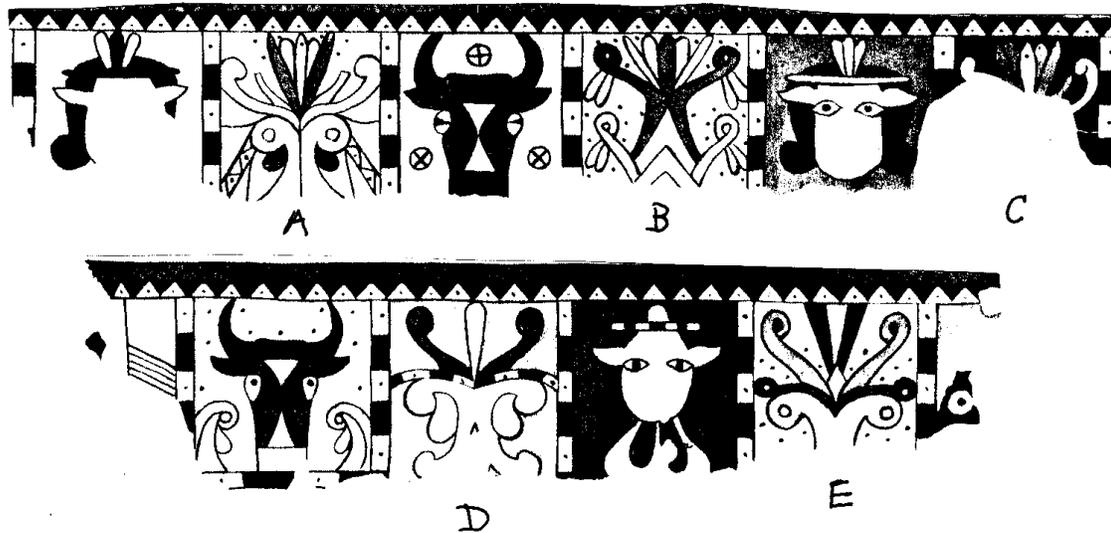
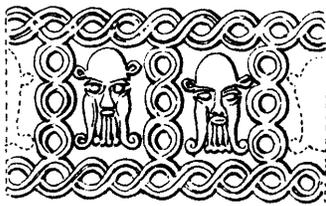


Fig. XIV.51

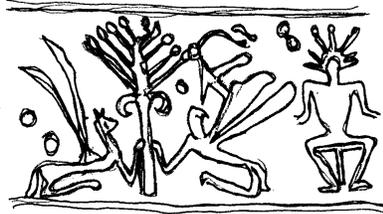
The paintings belong to the second stage of the palace, a rebuilding which probably dates to the later part of Nuzi II before it was conquered by Ashurballit. The intrinsic characters of the designs themselves compare with Syrian seals that are definitely dated to the Amarna period.

The two large fragments preserved (Fig.XIV.51) consist of three horizontal registers, the upper two being interrupted at intervals by vertical bands, subdivided into various geometrical designs. Only the lowermost register contains representative designs - bucrania, male or Hathor heads and plant hybrids - each one being isolated within a metope. Such a composition may eventually prove to have been popular in Mitanni; it recurs on three cylinder seals where guilloche bands form rectangles filled by the heads of men, bulls, and another type of horned ruminant (Fig. XIV.52-54).<sup>36</sup>

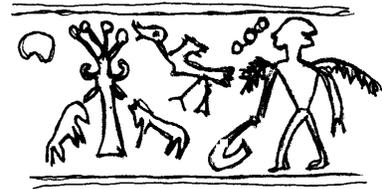
<sup>36</sup> Cf. also D. G. Hogarth, *Hittite Seals* (Oxford, 1920), 184, which is divided into six squares; this cylinder is probably Mitannian.



**Fig. XIV.52**



**Fig. XIV.53**



**Fig. XIV.54**

Aside from the panel composition, the heads on the seals are analogous to those of the mural. The fact that these seals, despite their small scale, possess some features in common with the murals is testimony for the reality of a Mitannian decorative complex. In the palace painting the plant designs alternating with the heads are very different from any on the cylinders at present known. The four almost complete patterns belong to the family of South-flower hybrids with which we have been mainly occupied, but advantage has been taken of the latitude allowed by the technique of painting to make fanciful elaborations. Since the details of each hybrid can be readily seen in Fig. XIV.51, it is necessary only to indicate possible comparisons and certain changes which appear to be characteristic.

Of the four forms, Fig. XIV.51E is the most conservative and adheres to the same general single-tiered pattern as on Second Syrian seals (Figs. XIII.1, XIII.3, XIII.6, XIII.7). It is distinguished from the orthodox, one-staged Mitannian plants by the presence of only three crowning leaves. In this it is comparable to the Second Syrian seals, Figs. XIII.2, XIII.3, XIII.6, and to several Third Syrian forms (Figs. XIII.31, XIII.32, XIII.37, XIII.35, XIII.36). Despite the extreme simplicity of the triple leaf groups, this character may possibly be a link with Syrian design.<sup>37</sup> A more probable connection with the coastal area may be found in the triangular lobe, appearing between the upturned

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<sup>37</sup> On the whole, triple leaf groups are rare in Mitannian art. In the mural itself, they are used to decorate the fillets of the Hathors. They appear on pottery (Figs XIV.66, XIV.59, XIV.61) and also on the "Mitannian" axe head found at Ras Shamra (C. F. A. Schaeffer, ed., *Ugaritica* I (Paris, 1939), p. 110, Fig. 101; Pl. XXII).

volute of Fig.XIV.51E. Similar elements occur on the Ras Shamra bowl and a seal from the same site (Figs. XIII.35, XIII.30). A third feature of interest is the element added between the large volute and the perianth. Its rounded ends suggest that it, too, is really a volute. The extremely flattened form can be paralleled by the Medinet Gurob and Ras Shamra bowls (Figs.XII.27, XIII.36) and on a number of Mitannian seals (Figs.XIV.15-16, XIV.18, XIV.20, XIV.26-2, XIV.23).

Fig. XIV.51D, like XIV.51E consists of a perianth and volute, the latter retaining its obovate lobe. The horizontal subsidiary band is an example of the addition of elements at will, without parallels elsewhere, which is a prominent characteristic of the mural palmettes. A more important feature is the bifurcation of the base, which links Fig. XIV.51D directly with the simplified patterns on Figs.XIV.37-38. However, despite the break in Fig. XIV.51D it is certain that the lobe placed within the split bases on the seal and plaque was absent here. This dissimilarity is offset by the resemblance of Fig.XIV.51D to Fig. XIV.37 in the general proportion of the split base to the South-flower perianth above. Here again we have a character connecting the mural with designs on small objects.

Like the two preceding patterns, Fig.XIV.51A is a single-tiered hybrid. It has been developed with the same spirit of complication which produced elaborated sphragistic designs such as Figs. XIV.19-22 and Figs.XIV.26-27. The means used are, however, different, consisting mainly of the addition of hairlike lines and bands pendant from the perianth, complementing a normal pair of drops. The palmette foliage is flanked by two short swollen stems, which, though reminiscent of the side stalks on the Medinet Gurob bowl and a Third Syrian seal (Figs. XII.27, XIII.30) are not demonstrably dependent on them. A tendency towards a disintegration of the inherited South-flower and volute motives is betrayed by the arbitrary line dividing those elements into two halves.

Of all the mural patterns, Fig. XIV.51B is farthest removed from the normal Mitannian South-flower compounds of the seals. The breakdown of the motives into a

series of ribbon patterns has been so far advanced that it is impossible to describe them in terms of South-flowers and volutes. Only the palmette leaves are normal. The volute was evidently split into two bands, whose lower prolongations may well have absorbed the stem of a vanished South-flower. The upper ends of the two ribbons twist back upon themselves to form double drops. The top banderoles are supported by streamers similarly curved, which are truncated by a triangular element. This lower “tier” may be the triangular lobe and volutes of Fig. XIV.51E dissected out and made into an independent design. However, it is not rewarding to lay too heavy stress upon the possible original elements of Fig. XIV.51B. We must imagine the painter starting out to decorate the space allotted to him. Living in a state that was in continuous and intimate contact with the main cultural areas of the Near East, he was able to draw on motives from varied sources.<sup>38</sup> In his repertoire the painter of the Nuzi murals included plant designs whose essential elements were in the final analysis Egyptian, but which he must have derived through the intermediaryship of the workshops of the Syrian littoral, and, in part at least, from the work of his own colleagues, the Mitannian seal cutters. Part of the time, as in Fig. XIV.51D and E, the painter’s results are rather comparable to the designs in use on cylinders, but in Fig. XIV.51A and still more in B we can observe him giving free scope to his fancy.

The freedom with which the Nuzi painter carried out such a complete dissolution of the inherited motives in Fig. XIV.51B is a clear sign of his far removal, both spatial and temporal, from the original sources of the elements which he was so strangely transmuting. In Egypt such disintegration of form and elimination of the floral character of the designs would have been completely impossible, and was unusual even in Syria.

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<sup>38</sup> Cf. H. Frankfort, “Notes on the Cretan Griffin,” *BSA*, XXXVII (1936/37), p. 114 for a brief analysis of the various components of these murals.

### “MITANNIAN” WARE

The one remaining important source for Mitannian plant design is the peculiar ceramic class known under a variety of names - Hurrian, Nuzi, Atchana - and recently discussed by Mallowan as “Subartu” ware.<sup>39</sup> It is an extremely interesting fabric decorated with a creamy white paint on a black or reddish slip. It appears suddenly in the reign of Shaushattar; Sidney Smith considers it a style introduced for the (Indo-European) ruling class and throughout its history it remained a luxury ware.<sup>40</sup> It continued in fashion for a number of years after the collapse of the Mitannian kingdom during the reign of Akhenaten. Moreover, it was in use in a much wider area than that ever directly controlled by Mitanni. Despite these facts, the “Mitannian” ware forms part of the same decorative tradition with which we have been dealing. Its center of distribution lies in Mitannian territory. In fact the pottery forms a case comparable to that of the seals, which were also diffused far beyond the borders of Mitanni proper and continued in use until 1200. In addition the cultural allegiance of the “Mitannian” ware is demonstrated clearly by certain characters linking the pot designs with those of the Mitannian seals.

Since previous to the reign of Shaushattar the only painted pottery had been the monotonous Khabur ware, decorated merely by series of horizontal bands, the vase painters now had to develop a new tradition.<sup>41</sup> Here we are concerned, not with the complete repertoire, but only with the vegetal designs or related motives. Unfortunately, despite the increasing amount of material available, there are not a large number of plant patterns, especially if we leave out of account one remarkably elaborate series of motives.

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<sup>39</sup> Mallowan, “White-painted Subartu pottery,” *Mélanges syriens offerts à Monsieur René Dussaud, II* (1939), pp. 887-894.

<sup>40</sup> Sidney Smith, *Alalakh and Chronology* (London, 1940), p. 5 and n. 16.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Mallowan, “White painted Subartu Pottery,” *Mélanges Dussaud II* pp. 887-894 for summary of the repertory and for Mallowan’s theory that the pottery became a medium of the painter in the gap separating the Mari murals, contemporary with the First Dynasty of Babylon, from Assyrian wall decorations.

These were created after the fall of Mitannian political power, and will be discussed in Chapter XV since they betray possible signs of Aegean influence.

The majority of published decorations are geometric, but in addition quadrupeds (Fig. XIV.55) and birds (Figs. XIV.56-57) appear. Normally the animals are arranged in registers; it is exceedingly rare for the beasts to interact with one another, but in one case, on a sherd from Tell Atchana (Fig. XIV.58) an ibex leaps towards his rampant companion.

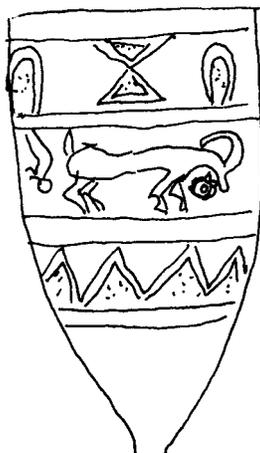


Fig. XIV.55

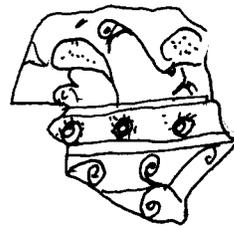


Fig. XIV.56

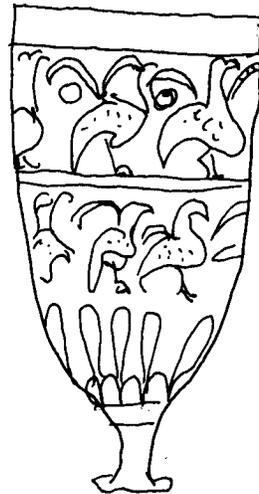


Fig. XIV.57



Fig. XIV.58

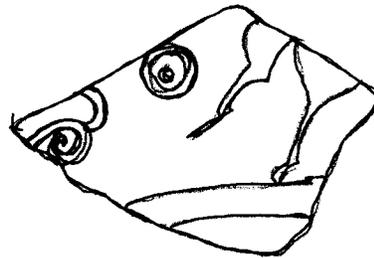
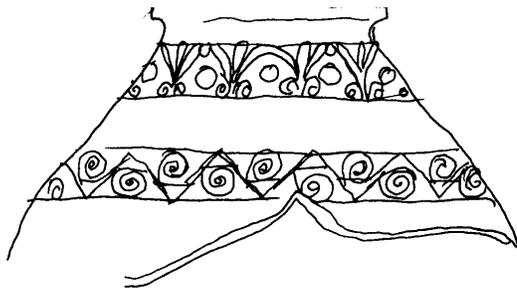


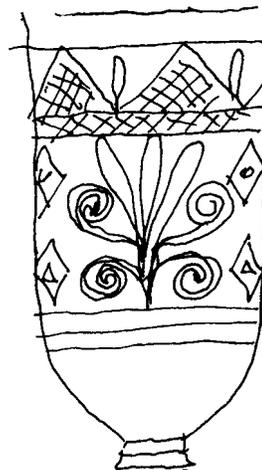
Fig. XIV.59

Still more interesting is another Atchana sherd preserving what is almost certainly part of an antithetical group (Fig. XIV.59). Only the hind legs of a ruminant rearing up beside two down-curving volutes of the plant are preserved. Nevertheless, this sherd is of the greatest value since it forms a link between the “Mitannian” pottery and Mitannian glyptic (cf. Figs. XIV.6-8, XIV.47). The carrying over into pottery of the ubiquitous sphragistic motive of a hybrid with symmetrical animals is strong testimony to the reality of Mitannian decorative traditions, even though the remnants of the plant remaining do not appear to conform to the details of the normal one-tiered sphragistic compounds. It is much to be hoped that future publications and excavations will bring to light more complete ceramic versions of this motive.

Besides the isolated antithetical group (Fig.XIV.59) and the rococo designs to be discussed in Chapter XV, the plant forms of the “Mitannian” ware may be divided into two classes, the palmettes and the volute patterns. Neither category is abundantly represented, but the former are rarer than the latter. All the examples of palmettes are from Nuzi II. The neck of a very large jar is ornamented by a band filled with very simple palmettes formed by a geometricized perianth and a triple leaf group (Fig.XIV.60).

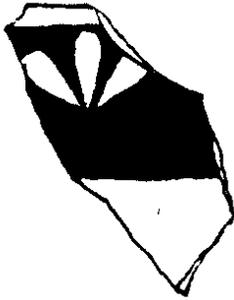


**Fig. XIV.60**

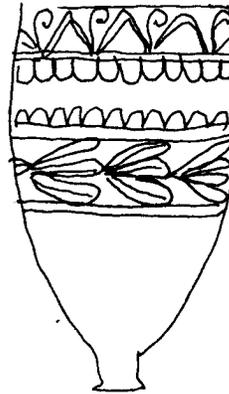


**Fig. XIV.61**

The design on a beaker is the same, save for the addition of a spiral-ended volute (Fig. XIV.61).

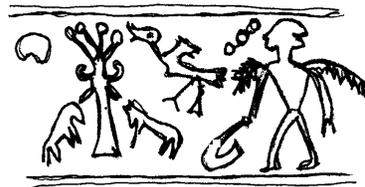
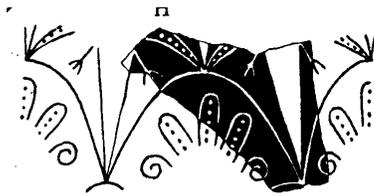


**Fig. XIV.62**



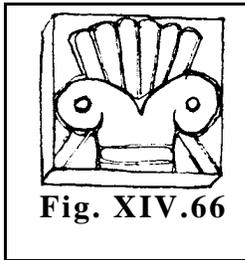
**Fig. XVI.63**

Only three leaves remain on the sherd pictured in Fig. XIV.62. Fig. XIV.63, a beaker from Atchana demonstrates the use of uncombined triple-leaf groups, but on the Nuzi sherd there is sufficient space within the register for a South-flower perianth, so that this piece may well have carried palmette patterns. Another small sherd was apparently part of a rapport design<sup>42</sup> in which three-leaved palmettes enclosed under semicircular arcs were combined with simple triple leaf groups and strange lobe-like projections (Fig. XIV.64). A complete restoration of the pattern is impossible. These examples are sufficient to indicate the use of palmettes on pottery, but probably do not illustrate the full range of types possible. In their simplicity, the palmettes of the pottery contrast strikingly with those of the seals and mural. The only design of comparable plainness is the palmette on a small bone plaque from Nuzi (Fig. XIV.66). Even there, six leaves are present, as well as two ribbons serving in lieu of drops; a volute is missing.



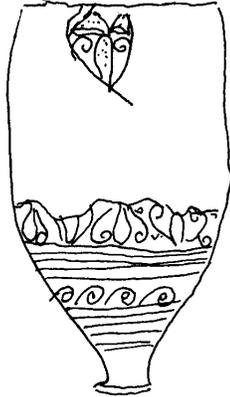
<sup>42</sup> A tiny sherd preserves a fragment of a design extremely interesting as a possible rapport pattern (Fig. XIV.65). Unfortunately, too little remains to make possible any analysis of the elements used.

**Fig. XIV.64**

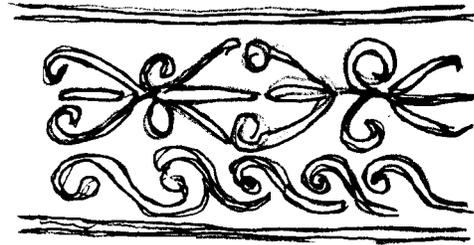


**Fig. XIV.65**

The volute designs, which display a wider variety than the palmettes, are based upon the Egyptian volute and thus ultimately are descended from the *Cyperus alopecuroides* Rott. sedge. Even in Egypt most, if not all, of the motive's vegetal nature had been lost. By the time it reached the hands of the Mitannians, it had become a completely geometrical formula. The volute as used on the "Mitannian" pottery and on certain comparable popular Mitannian seals was probably transmitted to Mitanni by a different medium from those forming part of the hybrid plants. In the latter the volute entered Mitanni as an integral part of the compounds, while in patterns such as Figs XIV.67 and XIV.56. it is the simple volute with its enclosed lobe which is predominant. It appears practically as an individual unit, and sometimes in a very Egyptianizing form.



**Fig. XIV.67**



**Fig. XIV.68**

In fact the ceramic volutes look as if they were derived much more directly from Egyptian prototypes than do the Mitannian hybrid plants. The links with the Second Syrian class which we have found on some Mitannian seals suggest strongly that the craftsmen of the Syrian interior first became acquainted with such compounds in the works of their coastal Syrian confreres. In contrast, the volutes of Figs. XIV.67 and XIV.56 are most probably direct adaptations of patterns borrowed from Egyptian scarabs, objects which were

common all over the Near East. Two unpublished scarabs, one from Judeideh and the other from an unspecified area in the Amuq, offer definite proof of the existence of examples decorated with volutes in the area in question;<sup>43</sup> they are also common in Palestine. The Egyptian volute was taken over both by Mitannian seal cutters and vase painters. An unpublished faience cylinder from Tainat is a straightforward adaptation of an Egyptian figure-8 pattern, the only extraneous feature being the two drill holes at the waist.

(Fig. XIV.68).

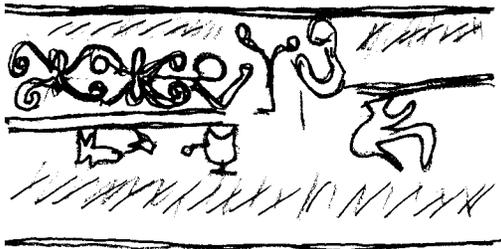


Fig. XIV.69



Fig. XIV.70

A similar motive appears on a sealing from a tablet found near Kirkuk (Fig. XIV.69). Although it is rare to find such unambiguous volute designs on the popular Mitannian seals,<sup>44</sup> examples of this class often bear contiguous, axially symmetrical S-spirals sometimes separated by straight bands, as subsidiary patterns.<sup>45</sup> Fig. XIV.70, from Nuzi, contains the same S-spiral motive, but here, instead of a continuous median line, there are three obovate lobes. Apparently some conflation between the ordinary s-spirals and the volute motive has occurred.<sup>46</sup> This is made quite evident by a two-handled jug found at

<sup>43</sup> Y-519 (F-8; level 5). X-03437.

<sup>44</sup> A seal found at Tell es-Safi may carry a less carefully cut and rather disintegrated version of Fig. XIV.68. Most of the lobes are missing; dumbbell-shaped elements are placed athwart the waists of the presumed figure-8's (Bliss-Macalister, *Excavations in Palestine*, Pl. LXXXIII, 4S).

<sup>45</sup> CS, p. 183, Fig. 46 (Nuzi); Pl. XLIII, j (A, 913). Macalister, *Excavations at Gezer*, III, Pl. CCXIV, 17. P.L.O. Guy, *Megiddo Tombs* (Chicago, 1938), Pls. XCIV, 3 (T.877 A1); CXXXI, 15 (T 912 B). Hogarth, *Hittite Seals*, p. 71, Fig. 73. Loud, *Megiddo I* (Chicago, 1948), Pl. LXVI, 4 carries what is probably a rather disintegrated example of this motive. R. W. Hamilton, *op. cit.*, Pl. XXXVIII, 406 (Tel Abu Hawam, stratum V). Such axially symmetrical spirals were also used on pottery (E. A. Speiser, "The Pottery of Tell Billa," *MJ*, XXIII [1932-33], Pl. LXIV, row 3, 2.3 [Billla, Stratum III]).

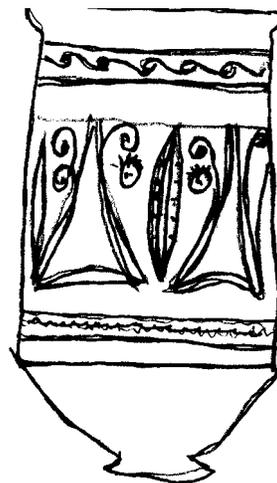
<sup>46</sup> De Clercq, 299 provides another example.

Atchana where white-bordered obovate lobes appear between the S-spiral bands serving as substitutes for the normal volute arms (Fig.XIV.71). Figs. XIV.71 and XIV.70, aside from constituting links between “Mitannian” ware and Mitannian glyptic, are important as illustrations of the breakdown of the Egyptian volute.

In other cases the normal form of that motive was better preserved. In Fig. XIV.67, a fragmentary goblet from Atchana II, one register may have been filled by simple volutes pointing alternately upwards or downwards. The lower part of a larger motive in an upper register is lost; its top consists of a volute. A series of these motives were strung together along a horizontal line on a sherd from Nuzi II (Fig.XIV.56). Below the tip, the arms of each volute are extended to form small curls.



**Fig. XIV.71**



**Fig. XIV.72**

A beaker from Chatal Huyuk is decorated by complete volutes alternating with dotted triangles (Fig.XIV.72). The only unusual feature is the pointed lanceolate shape assumed by the lobes. Very interesting is the breakdown of this design illustrated on a beaker from Tell Brak (Fig.XIV.73). There the pointed lobe has been duplicated and the arms of the volutes have been assimilated to the sides of the intervening triangles. With the disappearance of the spiral ends, it would be impossible to recognize this decoration as

having any connection with the Egyptian volute, were it not for the preservation of Fig. XIV.72.

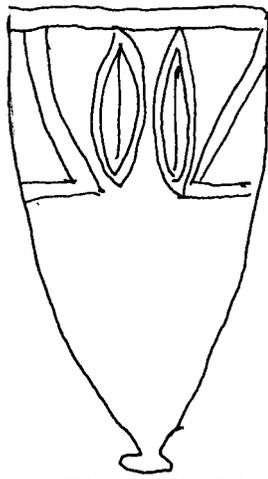


Fig. XIV.73

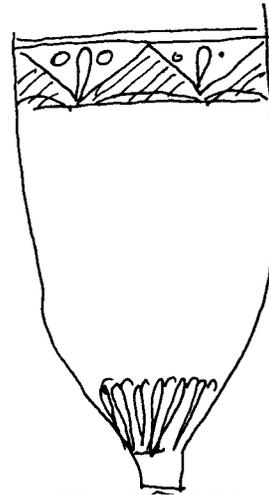


Fig. XIV.74

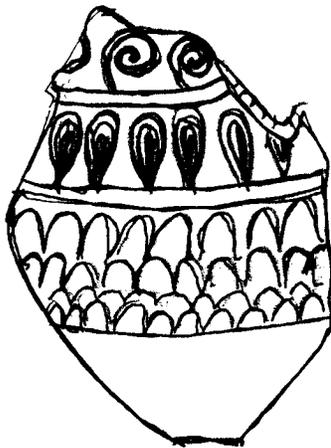


Fig. XIV.75

The remaining vessels are decorated by designs in which the obovate lobes of the volute are divorced from their normal enclosing arms, as in Fig. XIV.71. They may alternate with triangular or hour-glass elements (Figs. XIV.74 and XIV.55) or appear in serried rows as in Fig.

XIV.75. The lobes spring from a line of arcades in the bottom register of a beaker (Fig. XIV.57). It is barely possible that this may be somewhat comparable to the lobes springing from the angle between the semi-circular lines on Fig. XIV.64. Despite their simplicity, the identity of the lobes of Figs. XIV.55, XIV.57, XIV.75 as segregation products of Egyptian volutes seems certain. The obovate shape is constant and quite distinct from the broad-based loop (Fig. XIV.63) and scale patterns that may be found on the “Mitannian” ware.

## SOURCES FOR THE FIGURES

- XIV.1 Newell, 361
- XIV.2 VAR, Pl. C,2
- XIV.3 SAOC. 22, Title page vignette (Nuzi; impression)
- XIV.4 Weber, 478
- XIV.5 VAR, 577
- XIV.6 Iraq, VI (1939), Pl. VII, 54
- XIV.7 BN, 469
- XIV.8 *Megiddo Tombs*, Pl. CLXXVI, 3
- XIV.9 Ward, 1002
- XIV.10 Brussels, p. 201 (imprint from Sippar)
- XIV.11 Ward, 1003
- XIV.12 Newell, 360
- XIV.13 *Megiddo Tombs*, p. 182, Fig. 180, 2 (Nuzi)
- XIV.14 BN, 468
- XIV.15 A, 951
- XIV.16 CS, Pl. XLII, o
- XIV.17 Furtwangler, *Antike Gemmen I*, Pl.I, 6
- XIV.18 *Megiddo Tombs*, p.182, 3 (Nuzi)
- XIV.19 Brett, 99
- XIV.20 A, 945
- XIV.21 Weber, 267
- XIV.22 Weber, 470

- XIV.23 Moore, 174
- XIV.24 Ward, 987
- XIV.25 A, 1196
- XIV.26 Contenau, *Les tablettes de Kerkouk*, p. 72, fig. 102
- XIV.27 CS, p. 276, Fig. 90
- XIV.28 CS, 274, Fig. 88
- XIV.29 Starr, *Nuzi* II, Pl. CXVIII, E
- XIV.30 Brett, 104
- XIV.31 Newell, 364
- XIV.32 Moore, 168
- XIV.33 CS, p. 183, Fig. 44 (Nuzi)
- XIV.34 Starr, *Nuzi* II, Pl. CXIX, C
- XIV.35 Rowe, *Four Canaanite Temples of Beth Shan*, Pl. XXXVII
- XIV.36 *Ibid.*, Pl. XXXVII, 9
- XIV.37 *Ibid.*, Pl. XL, 1
- XIV.38 Starr, *op. cit.*, Pl. CXXXI, A
- XIV.39 CS, Pl. XLIII, h
- XIV.40 A, 611
- XIV.41 CS, p. 184, Fig. 50
- XIV.42 Brussels, 481
- XIV.43 CS, p. 183, Fig. 46 (Nuzi)
- XIV.44 Syria, XVI (1935), Pl. XXXV, 1st column from left, top (Ras Shamra)
- XIV.45 AJ, XIX (1939) Pl. XIII, AT/8/170 (Atchana)
- XIV.46 Syria, *op. cit.* 3rd column from left, 2nd from top
- XIV.47 A.S. Murray et al, *Excavations in Cyprus*, Pl. IV, 299
- XIV.48 Syria, *op. cit.*, 2nd column from left, 2nd from top

- XIV.49 Ibid., 2nd column from left, 2nd from top
- XIV.50 AJ, XIX (1939), Pl. XIII, AT/8/92 (Atchana)
- XIV.51 Starr, *Nuzi II*, Pl. CXXVIII,H, PL. CXXIX, D
- XIV.52 VAR, Pl. D, 2
- XIV.53 VAR, Pl. D, 3
- XIV.54 VAR, 579
- XIV.55 MJ, XXIII (1932-33), Pl. LXI, 4 (Tell Billa)
- XIV.56 Starr, *Nuzi II*, Pl. LXXIX, I
- XIV.57 AJ, XIX(1939), Pl. XVI, 1 (Atchana)
- XIV.58 JHS, LVI (1936), Pl. VIII (Atchana)
- XIV.59 Ibid.
- XIV.60 Starr, *Nuzi II*, Pl. 69, a2
- XIV.61 Ibid., Pl. LXXVIII, S
- XIV.62 Ibid., Pl. LXXIX, w
- XIV.63 AJ, XIX (1939), Pl. XVI, 1 (Atchana)
- XIV.64 Starr, op. cit., Pl. LXXIX, o
- XIV.65 Ibid., Pl. LXXIX, r1
- XIV.66 Ibid., Pl. LXXIX, r
- XIV.67 AJ, XVIII (1938), Pl. XI, 12
- XIV.68 Unpublished cylinder seal from Tell Tainat
- XIV.69 Brussels, p. 203
- XIV.70 Starr, op. cit. Pl. CXVIII, H
- XIV.71 AJ, XIX (1939), Pl. XV, 1 (Atchana)
- XIV.72 Bulletin, Oriental Institute I(1937), back cover
- XIV.73 Melanges Dussaud II, Pl. I, bottom, 4th from left
- XIV.74 AJ, XVIII (1938), Pl. XI,11

XIV.75 Ingholt, "*Rapport préliminaire sur sept campagnes de fouilles a Hama en Syrie (1932-38*" *Det Kgl. Danske Videnskabernes Selskab. Archaeologisch Kunsthistorike Meddelelser*, III (1940), Pl. XX, 5