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FROM THE TREASURES OF SYRIA

ESSAYS ON ART AND ARCHAEOLOGY
IN HONOUR OF STEFANIA MAZZONI

edited by

Paola Ciafardoni and Deborah Giannessi



NEDERLANDS INSTITUUT VOOR HET NABIJE OOSTEN

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FOUNDING AND PLANNING A NEW TOWN: THE SOUTHERN TOWN GATE AT ZINCIRLI

Marina Pucci

Abstract

Stefania Mazzoni's many scientific contributions to the archaeology of Iron Age northern Syria and southeastern Anatolia include iconographic analysis, architecture, and town planning. Her work during the 1980's and 1990's on the chronological sequences of the carved reliefs from the Iron Age (1974, 1977, 1994, 2011) and on the general understanding of the material culture, in addition to her reassessment (2000a and 2000b) of the Iron Age I to III sequence, has provided an important framework for recent field activities in that region dealing with that specific period. Moreover the archaeological sequence at Tell Afis has uncovered crucial elements on the transition from the Late Bronze to the Iron Age, emphasizing the relevance of the materials and archaeological contexts in order to better understand changes in material culture. Her classes at the University in Pisa concerning Syro-Hittite archaeology coincided with her period of major academic production in this field and strongly influenced my research. Her enthusiastic and rigorous research methods positively influenced generations of students, including mine. This paper, which deals with the evidence of one of the Syro-Hittite sites and analyses a single monument, i.e. the town gate at Zincirli, from both iconographic, architectural, and topographic perspectives, therefore owes much to her seminal influence.

INTRODUCTION

Archaeological research at the site of Zincirli was carried out at the end of the 19th century by a German team financed by the Orient Comité (Wartke 2005), resumed by the Oriental Institute in 2006 (Scholen and Fink 2009a and b), and uncovered several building phases of a large settlement dating to the Iron Age¹. The settlement is structured into a walled upper citadel accessible by a single citadel gate (D in Fig. 1) and a large lower town accessible through three gates located NW (C in Fig. 1), NE (B in Fig. 1) and South (A in Fig. 1), the largest and main one being the southern one.

The fortification of the lower town together with the three gates were excavated by Humann in 1888 during the very first campaign at the site, and in 1891 they were re-in-

¹ I use in this article the following Iron Age periodization: Iron Age I (12th to mid-9th century BC), Iron Age II (mid-9th to beginning of the 7th cent. BC), Iron Age III (beginning of the 7th century BC to the 5th century BC), cf. Mazzoni 2000a, Pucci forthcoming. Drawings illustrating this article were made by the author except Figs. 3-4 done by Corrado Alvaro.

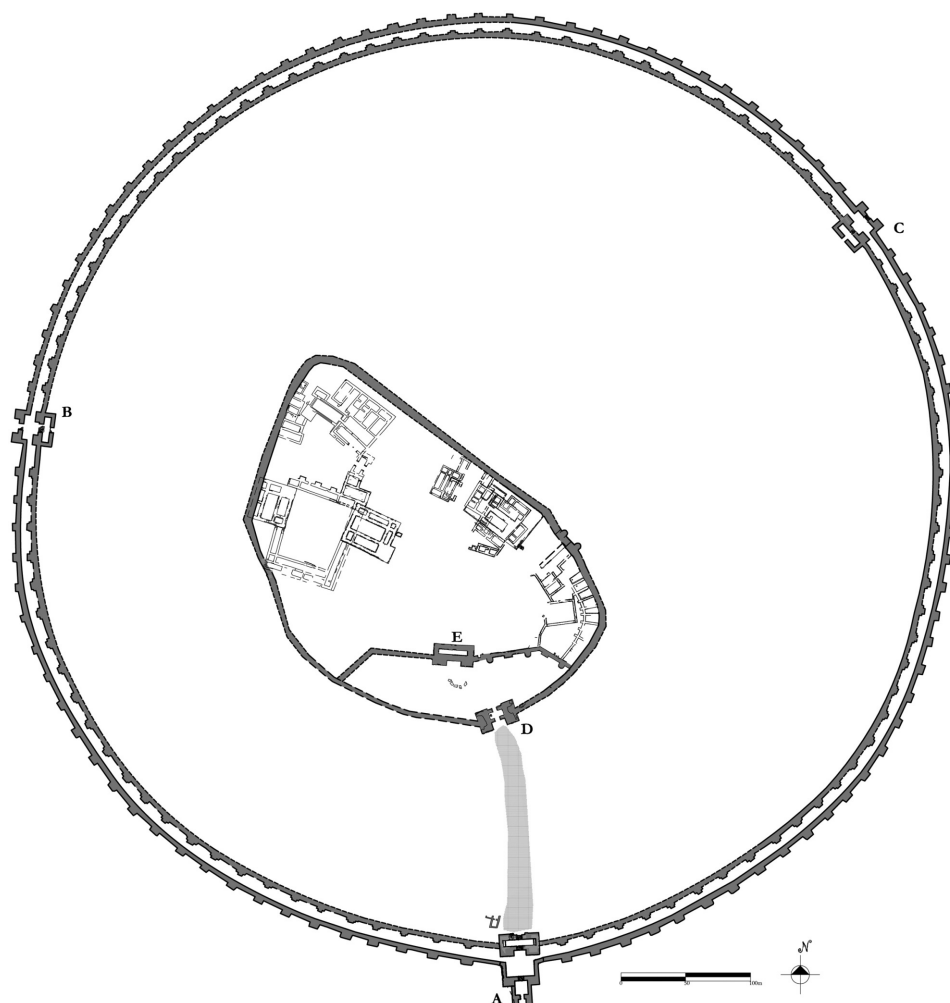


Fig. 1: Zincirli, general view of the town and mound walls with gates.
The grey shade indicates the access from the town to the mound gate.

vestigated by Koldewey in order to document the architectural details for publication. The first architectural plan of the southern gate drafted by Koldewey was published in 1898 (Humann et al. 1898, Pl. X), and showed a large double gate with central courtyard, and its decorated blocks were published separately in 1902 without their archaeological context, which von Luschan already in their first publication declared ‘lost’ (idem 1902, 203-205). Subsequently both the building and the orthostats were considered separately either from an architectural or from an iconographic perspective. While the architecture of the gate, although not necessarily canonical, drew little attention from scholars (Naumann 1971), the relatively archaic style of the orthostats has been studied several times (from a stylistic perspective as in Orthmann 1971, or iconographic as in Mazzoni 2000a), being one of the more ancient examples of Iron Age I gate decoration. Gilibert (2011c) has

reviewed the iconographic program in detail, also stressing the lack of contextual information on their original placement.

A recent project (2010-2013) on the Zincirli archives kept at the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin and on the unpublished material from Zincirli at the same museum² together with ongoing archaeological excavations at the southern gate area³ allow a reconsideration of this monumental gate both from an architectural and from an iconographic point of view, providing important data on the original location of the carved blocks and on the layout and arrangement of the gate itself.

This paper incorporates these new data with the published ones in order to provide an overview of the monument as a complete complex, compares its structure and iconography with contemporaneous similar monuments in order to emphasize the symbolism behind the ‘Gate concept’ during the Iron Age I period. This symbolism will then be analysed and compared with Late Bronze Age monuments in order to better understand continuity and change in cultural concepts related to the idea of the gate and potential shifts in meaning. All references to the carved slabs/orthostats marked with numbers refer unless otherwise indicated to Orthmann’s catalogue (1971).

2. THE SOUTHERN TOWN GATE AT ZINCIRLI: DESCRIPTION OF THE MONUMENT

2a. The sources

During the first campaign of excavations at Zincirli, Humann, who was director only for that first season in 1888, kept a daily journal describing first the trip, then the organization of the dig camp and the excavations themselves. He was personally extremely active on the dig and recorded the activities which the 90 workers (on average) were carrying out on the mound. He noticed a change in the topography of the fields at the bottom of the hill and discovered immediately underneath the surface, where the terrain slightly dropped in elevation, the town fortifications: two parallel stone walls surrounding the central acropolis and describing an almost perfect circle around it (Fig. 1).⁴

² The Project, led by the author, is financed by the White Levy foundation and aims at publication of the unpublished material from the site (currently in preparation with Prof. G. Lehmann). The precious support of Dr. R. Wartke, curator and vice director of the Vorderasiatisches Museum, who not only provided access to the depot, but also helped in deciphering some of the original documents, was vital for the success of the project.

³ The reopening of the southern Gate area was possible only thanks to Prof. D. Schloen (Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago) and director of the Excavation project at Zincirli, who let me reopen this sector and supported unconditionally different strategies of approach. I would like also to thank Virginia Herrmann, who reviewed and commented on this article before submission.

⁴ For a general overview of the history of the excavations of the town wall and the archival research cf. Pucci in print.

In 2007 under the newly resumed excavations at Zincirli, directed by David Schloen from the Oriental Institute of Chicago, a 40 x 10 m area was opened just to the north of the southern gate. This area (Area 4) was archaeologically investigated during one season under the supervision of Robert Mullins, who uncovered several building phases of the lower town. In 2012 and 2013 a small team from the Freie Universität Berlin under my supervision reopened this area and connected it to the “original German trench” of the Southern gate in order to better understand phases and development of the space just north of the gate. The trench included also part of the gate itself and allowed us to correct in part Koldewey’s plan of the southern gate, and to better understand the monument and its spatial layout.

Thus, on the one hand Humann’s *Feldtagebuch* provides us with base information concerning the original layout of the carved blocks and how to understand the conditions of the excavation at the southern gate, and on the other hand, current field research in this area carried out in less humid weather conditions⁵ allowed us to add important details, which complete the analysis of the structure.⁶

2b. The architectural elements

The Southern Gate at Zincirli (A Fig. 1) is the largest of the three gates providing access to the lower town (the two others are West and East, B and C Fig. 1) and the one which, through a cobbled and direct street, led to the only access to the citadel (the citadel Gate, D, Fig. 1). The gateway consists of two separate structures (Fig. 2), each connected to one of the two parallel town walls: both cover a total area of approximately 1150 m² and are not architecturally connected to each other (for details cf. Pucci 2008a, 17-18).

Our knowledge concerning the outer part of the gateway has not improved after Humann’s excavation in 1888 and Koldewey’s draft in 1891, because it was never subject to new field investigation. It is here sufficient to state that no archaeological elements until now prove that the two town walls were built at different times; rather it seems more likely that both walls and consequently both passageways in the southern gateway were erected at the same time⁷. The area is today very badly preserved and a modern irrigation channel cuts part of the protruding tower of the outer gate.

Inner and outer gates, although both consist of two passageways with two protruding towers each, differ slightly in layout (Fig. 2): the outer one is smaller in size (200 m²), and protrudes from the town wall into the external fields, forming an internal courtyard

⁵ The valley was reclaimed during the 1960’s.

⁶ An exhaustive publication of the phases and the materials from this area will be included in the general publication of the excavations.

⁷ For a more detailed analysis of this problem cf. Pucci 2008a: 17; also Casana and Herrmann 2010 and Schloen and Fink 2009a support this same view.

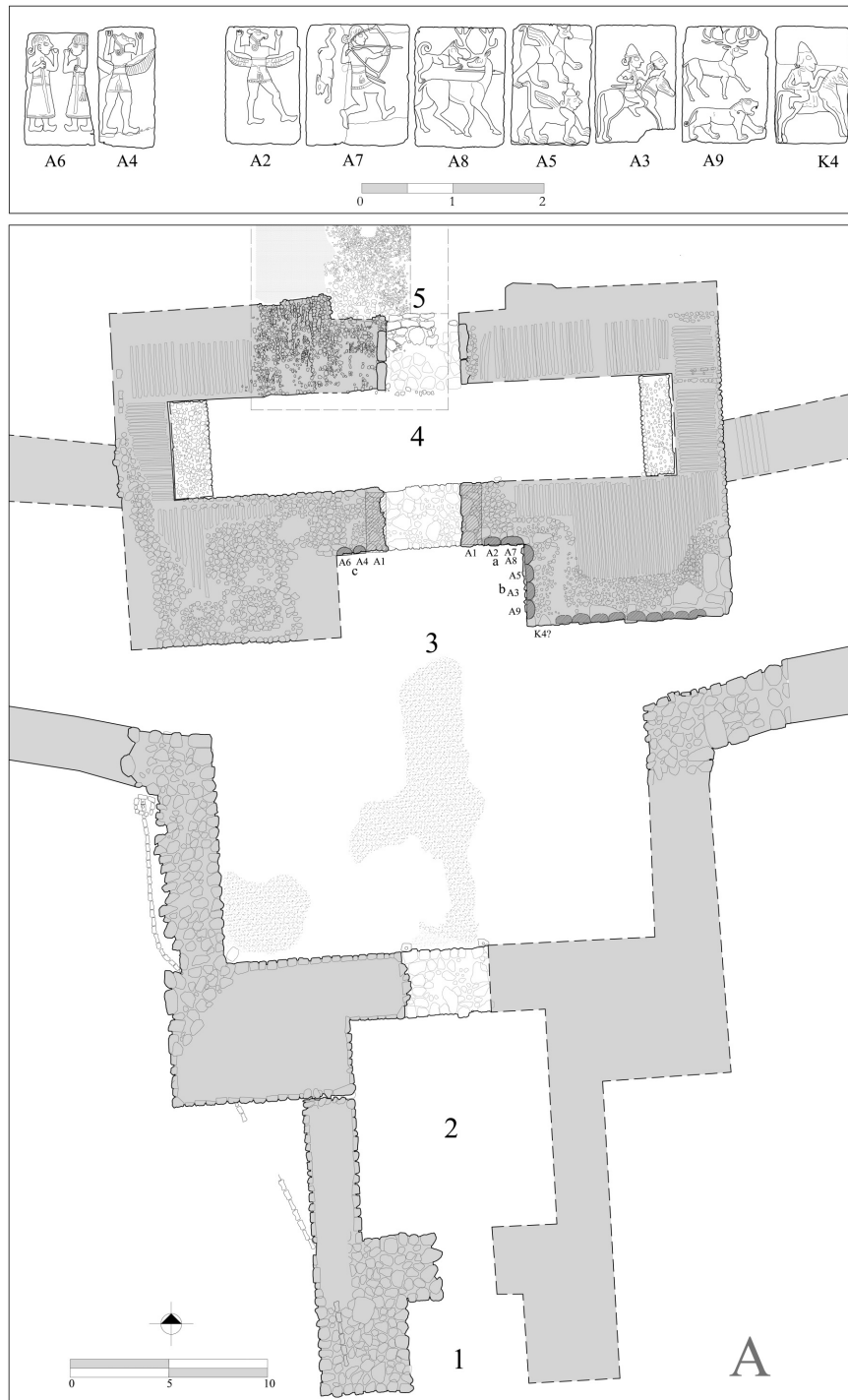


Fig. 2: Zincirli, plan of the Southern Town Gate based on Koldewey's drawing and on current excavations (square area). The upper row shows the sequence of the orthostats.

(room 3 in Fig. 2) between both gates which extends over 400 m². Although double fortification walls are not uncommon in the Near East⁸, the entrances are usually aligned with the walls fulfilling defensive functions and the builders avoid to create unnecessary corners (as in the southern gate), which would have weakened the wall itself. Thus it seems likely that the specific layout of the external gate was functional to an enlargement of the internal courtyard despite the consequent decrease in defensive power. The internal gate has the typical layout of a single chambered gate with two protruding towers, it covers an extent of 550 m², the towers are solid or sound and the openings are located in niches both on the south (the niche is created by the towers) and on the north, where the wall is much thicker than observed by Koldewey, and it protrudes inside the settlement (Fig. 2).

When the outer gate was excavated, only its western part was preserved over a height of approximately three stone courses, which are currently visible as a small hump in the terrain. The internal gate is made of a stone socle and a no longer preserved mudbrick superstructure. Currently it preserves most of the elongated blocks (in German *Läufer*) which were the bases for the carved or plain blocks located on the socle. The carved blocks were all removed, while the plain ones were left collapsed on their face in situ (Koldewey drew them in his 1891's plan). Currently only the remains of one block is still visible in the field, while all others, as well as a great number of the slabs employed in the internal threshold,⁹ were removed in the 1970'ies and 1980'ies (as a coin found in the pit clearly shows!), probably to be used as building materials.

The large slabs of the internal threshold were built underneath the jambs of the internal doorway, and immediately to the north of the threshold, still inside the niche of the doorway, a massive stone step was found: this step is made (in the trench excavated in 2012 and 2013) of three oblong stones (approximately 80 cm in length). It closes the passage niche and it elevates the street leading from the gate to the north, i.e. to the citadel, of approximately 20 cm above the level of the threshold (Fig. 2 between room 4 and space 5).¹⁰ The step was in use with three street floors and it shows two wear traces of possibly wheels above it, which may confirm the observation made by Koldewey about wheel traces on the threshold (cf. Koldewey 1898, 113). It is however obvious that the step did not facilitate the access of wheeled vehicles, since it represents a necessary architectural element to overcome a difference in height with the level of the internal town. In the most ancient phase which has been extensively excavated until now, the area just to the north of the gate was completely open and paved with very well laid cobble stones

⁸ Other examples of double town walls, besides the Hittite casemate constructions which also included a double wall, it is worth mentioning the town wall at Karkemish (cf. Woolley 1921, 53).

⁹ The plan shows in black continuous the preserved slabs and in dotted line the slabs drawn by Koldewey, but no longer preserved.

¹⁰ We removed half of the step and it was not possible to identify a clear former even paving, rather an accumulation of burnt material and a levelled reddish earth accumulation. This accumulation being lower than the preserved threshold, we will consider this step as being original part of the gate structure.

and pottery sherds. No building or structures adjoined the gate directly, leaving a sort of square/plaza just to the north of the structure.

The stone socle consists of medium-sized stones laid inside a narrow timber frame, which was not only located between the stones and the mud brick superstructure, but was employed for the whole height of the socle: the timbers were small in size (a measured thickness of about 20 cm¹¹) and were laid alternately with one row of stones, forming a sort of wooden frame filled with stones.¹² The internal part of the inner gate (4/5 in Fig. 2) is currently preserved up to a height of three courses of stones above the elevation of the internal threshold: this was the stone socle above the walking level on which the orthostats were located. In fact one of the three photos made in the southern gate area (Koldewey 1898, 133 Abb. 24) clearly shows that the plain orthostats of the internal eastern tower of the gate collapsed face down at a much lower level than their original bottom level, indicating that the lower three courses of stones were raised from ground level of courtyard 3. No foundation pit could be identified so far, as if the whole structure was founded directly on the ground with a massive stone socle, and without proper underground foundations on the external part of the gate.¹³ However, during the phase of use of the lowest three street pavements, the ground level of the lower town was higher than the outside, so that the two or three courses of the stone socle were not visible from the lower town.

2c. The iconographic components

During the first campaign in 1888, eight carved blocks and 8 plain ones were found while excavating the southern gate. The season was very rainy and the fields in the lower town were transformed into a marsh, so that not only digging was extremely difficult but also the stratigraphic connections between the monuments were very blurred by the mud covering everything. However, Humann was still able, while digging the southern gate, to sketch the original location of the carved orthostats and to write down a few architectural observations on the monument.

¹¹ The timber is not preserved in the structure, but the empty spaces between the stones clearly show the pattern of the timber frame.

¹² In this building the timber frame fulfilled more static functions rather than helping in fixing the blocks to the walls, also because the carved blocks are not slabs that need to be fixed, but rather large stones that keep the wall together.

¹³ This element is rarely extensively researched in gates, because usually gates are not investigated underneath their threshold level. Moreover the particular soil composition of the lower town accumulation at Zincirli and the fact that it has been a marsh has made extremely difficult recognizing the differences in colour and consistency of the earth accumulation. However as far as Zincirli is concerned the citadel gate seems to have had a platform underneath it (cf. Koldewey 1898, 125), following a Hittite traditional building method (Naumann 1971, 291).

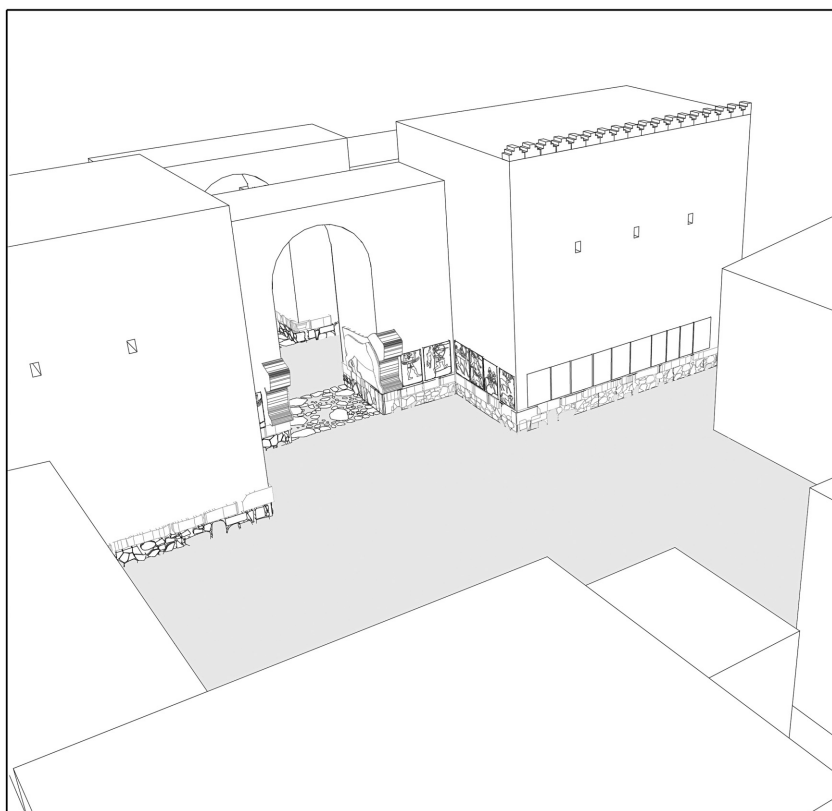


Fig. 3: Schematic reconstruction of the internal courtyard of the southern mound gate.

Between April 30th and May 19th 1888 Humann describes the excavations, the orthostats and their location. All blocks were found collapsed face down, four on the eastern side of the entrance niche (a. in Fig. 2) and two on top of these on the northern side of the entering passage (b. in Fig. 2), everything was lying in the marsh, which was 60 cm deep. While pulling the carved block from the marsh Humann provided a brief description of the represented subjects so that he could document the original sequence. In this same marsh, archaeologists also found fragments of two enormous portal lions, the body of one heavily damaged. On the western side of the entrance niche (c. in Fig. 2) two more carved blocks were found, and no remains of the potential portal lion.¹⁴ A ninth carved block, which has been published together with the other eight, since very similar in style and dimensions, was found reemployed in a house and previously found in the southern Kurd-

¹⁴ In a first sketch by Humann, which was also published in Humann and von Luschan (1898, 94), he just indicates the area where the collapsed blocks were found and in which number, while in a second unpublished one he reports their original location describing the images carved on them, both on the western and on the eastern side of the entrance.

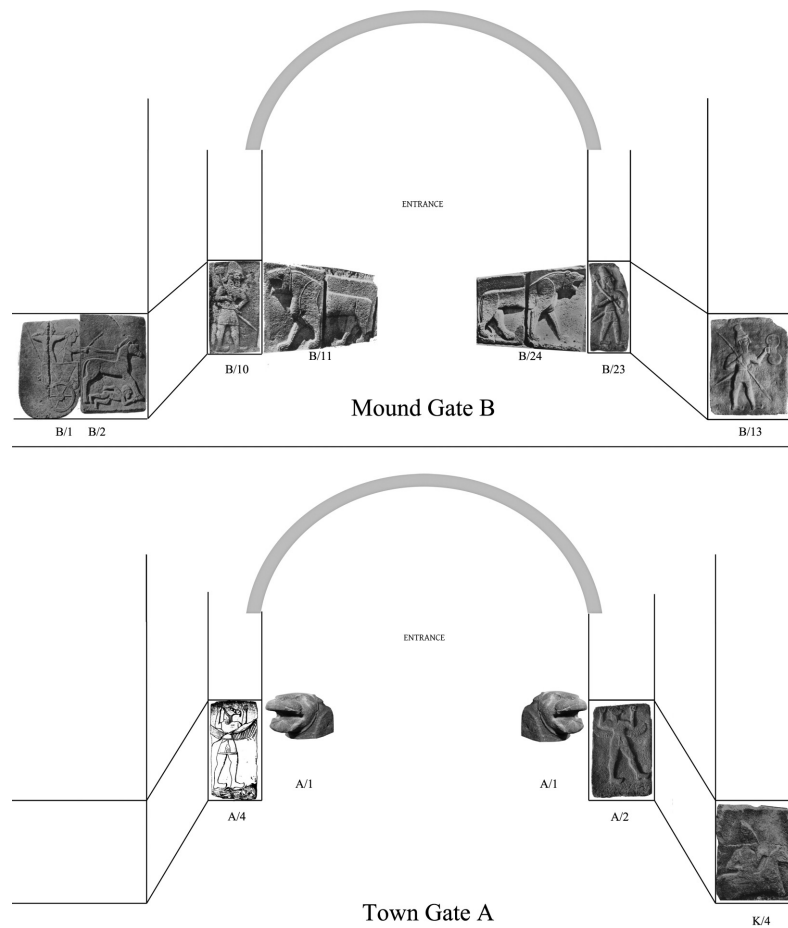


Fig. 4: Frontal views of “iconographic themes” on the Mound and Town Gate.

ish cemetery (Orthmann 1971, Pl. 66 shows the block still in its latest find-spot inside a modern wall).

In the same year the blocks were then reshaped on site in order to reduce their weight, were transformed into thin slabs, immediately removed from the site and transported to Berlin¹⁵. While digging in this area in 2012, it was possible to retrieve one of the remaining backs of these blocks and to measure its width. According to this information, to the measurements taken in the field of the single remaining block, to the measurement of the face of the carved slabs, taken by other scholars (mainly Orthmann 1971), and to the supposed measurements of the portal lions given by Humann, their original location has been reconstructed and mapped both on the plan and on the three dimensional recon-

¹⁵ Only one slab was not walled in the Pergamon exhibition, and I had the chance to measure its width to approximately 10 cm.

struction (Figs. 2-4). Two years later, 1891, when Humann was no longer active in Zincirli, Koldewey examined the same monument in order to describe and draft it.

The preserved carved orthostats completely fill the eastern side of the entrance niche (Fig. 3), while one block is missing between the plain and the carved ones on the southern side of the eastern tower. Two other carved blocks were found on the western side of the entrance niche while the remaining ones both carved and plain were completely missing from the western tower together with part of the stone socle as also Koldewey's drawings clearly show (*idem* 1898: Pl. X). Thus it is not possible to reconstruct the complete iconographic design of the gate. It is however possible to single out certain features which belong to the iconographic project. All blocks (Fig. 2) include single scenes, except for one which develops over two slabs (A/7-8), the figures were intended to be viewed from the courtyard and were higher than the level of the floor. The southern faces of the towers were decorated with plain orthostats, a choice which was probably related to the presence of the outer wall at approximately four meters to the south and possibly to an older tradition (*cf.* paragraph 4).

Entrance

From the vantage point of a person entering the gateway to the large courtyard 3 and looking towards the internal gateway (Fig. 4 bottom) the first visible elements were the two massive lions (A/1) protruding from the doorway into the entering niche flanked on either side by two very similar bird-headed demons with raised arms ('Atlas pose'). The group has a symmetrical structure keeping the doorway as the central element, and locating one lion protome and standing griffin at each side. The orientations of the feet of the figures indicate a general movement to the east and to the south as if they were encircling the space between the towers.

Humann affirms that he found two lions' heads (Fig. 4), although only one was photographed lying in situ (and published in Humann 1898: Abb. 93), it was illustrated three years later by Koldewey as lying in the middle of the internal courtyard (Humann, von Luschan et al. 1898: Pl. X). This same head was taken by the French army, then brought by Colonel Normand to the Louvre Museum in 1922, and since then on display there.¹⁶ The head is carved in the round, the ears of the lion are represented as lying flat on the head, the eyes are hollowed to contain inlays (now lost), the mane is rendered with horizontal lines, the mouth is open, the tongue or the lower teeth are not preserved.¹⁷ Both shoulders roughly bossed are carved as if the protome was protruding with the whole front

¹⁶ Two very good photographs of this head are available online at the Louvre website: http://cartelen.louvre.fr/cartelen/visite?srv=car_not_frame&idNotice=24364
These pictures have been used in the reconstruction in Fig. 4.

¹⁷ However according to Koldewey's drawing the head of the lion seems to have had a sort of stone peg, which is however completely absent in the field photo and in the Museum photo: it is more likely instead that the head of the lion was intentionally cut before archaeologist uncovered it, rendering the

part. The head measures according to the Louvre Database 1.5 m in depth and one meter in width so that it fits with the three meter in depth reconstructed by Humann.¹⁸ The lion portal figures consisted according to Koldewey's (1898: 113) description of two large blocks each: the frontal one carried also the head carved in the round (von Luschan 1902: Abb. 93) and the frontal part of the lion's body in relief, while the other block represented the rear of the animal.¹⁹ The layout of the lions was probably similar, but on a larger scale to the two lions found at the entrance to gate Q in the citadel of Zincirli: the body is carved on the side but not on the back as for example in the two lions (von Luschan 1902: Taf. XLVI) from the lions' pit, and may indicate a less modelled style in rendering these animals.

The two winged bird-headed genii (A/2) with raised arms (Figs. 2, 4 bottom) face towards the east and seem to repeat the guarding and protecting role of the two lions, being employed as a counterpart for the portal lions. While the same figure is well-known in the Syro-Hittite iconography (cf. Orthmann 1971: 240) as standing alone and also with raised arms, the iconographic features (low wings, raised arms, closed beak) of these two genii were grouped by Orthmann together with those from Ain Dara (D/5)²⁰ and Karkemish (E/5) and seem to be related to a local north Syrian and Middle Assyrian traditions. Bird headed genii recur also in other position at gates, as in the citadel gate of Zincirli (slab B/16), where an almost identical figure in the same position was located in this case on the side of the entrance niche. The raised arms, the supernatural nature of the genii and mainly their location show these figures to have a guarding and protective function.²¹

East

On the eastern side, the row of blocks continued with a stag hunt scene (A/7-8) carved on two blocks around the corner (Figs. 2 and 5): the scene has also a direction towards the east/south, the hunter/archer is armed with a sword and helped by a dog, behind him there is probably a dead hare²². The hunter bears no socially distinctive ele-

piece a sort of torso. Later refinements to make the bottom flat were carried out in the 1920's for the later transport.

¹⁸ Three meters long portal lions were found also at Hama (2.90 m), Ain Dara (3.30 m), here at the Quermauer (2.75 m) so that it is a standardized size. The width of these lions varies, in the drawing it has been reconstructed to one metre considering the dimension of the preserved fragment. The measurements are taken from Orthmann 1971, Buhl and Riis 1990.

¹⁹ The use of double blocks to represent one large figure occurs in Zincirli also at the citadel gate, where the both lions and bulls (von Luschan 1902: Pl. 44 and 45) were carved on two blocks building the jambs of the doors. However none of them combines the double carved blocks with the protome.

²⁰ The Ain Dara bird-headed genii differ only in style, holding their hands in a different way (shaping a U), wear short wings and have winged feet.

²¹ In general on Guardian figures cf. Rykwert 2002, for Assyria Maul 2000.

²² This representation of the dead hare behind the hunter is unique in the Syro-Hittite Hunt scenes although the prey is represented in the hands of the hunter in the citadel Gate at Zincirli (B/33) or of

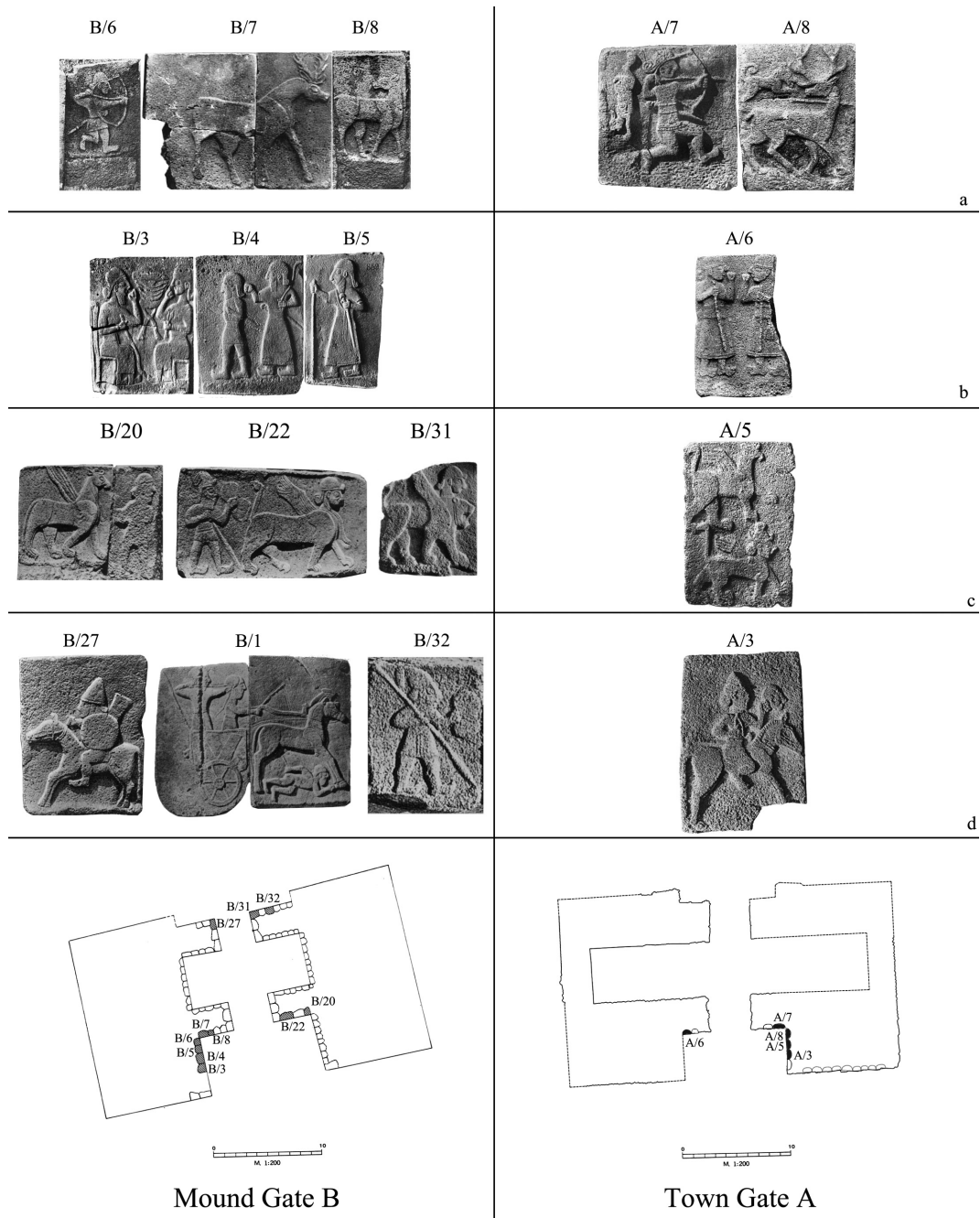


Fig. 5: Iconographic subjects on the mound and town gate: a. defeat of wild animal; b. dynastic power/political stability; c. master of fantastic animals; d. Enemy defeat/military parade.

ment, is represented with one raised foot probably in the act of running, he has already shot an arrow in the neck of the stag, which bends its head towards him. The scene, a canonical stag hunt with the bow, is well attested also in other Syro-Hittite Gates of the early period and varies only slightly in the number of the animals and of archers. At the same site, in the citadel gate, the hunt (again a stag hunt, B/6-/8) is also located at the corner of the entrance niche and develops on four orthostats. Here the archer running (with the same raised foot as in the town gate) shoots towards a stag carved over two blocks and towards a fawn which turns its head towards the archer: the three heads are on the same horizontal line, while the ground level on which they stand and walk varies according to their size (higher for the archer and fawn). The scene is ‘closed’ by the movement of the fawn in the same way as in the town gate’s hunt scene, also in Halaf in the entrance of the Tempel Palast (von Oppenheim 1955, Ba/6) and at the Gate in Karatepe (A/29): the Halaf scene is very rigid with the archer aiming at the animal, while the second follows the same pattern as in the Zincirli ones. The stag hunt recurs (without bent animal in this case) also at the King’s gate in Karkemis (H/6) in a similar arrangement although the archer is here standing and not running, he has not shot his arrow yet, and again in the entrance of the Tell Halaf Tempelpalast (Ba/1); in all examples, hunt scenes are related to gate structures or entrances and witness the well-known symbolic relationship between gate structures and hunt (Mazzoni 1997).²³

The whole western flank of the eastern tower was then occupied by a series of animals (starting with the hunted stag on the corner) all marching towards the south and by one single rider carrying a severed head.

The first from the corner (Figs. 2 and 5) and immediately following the hunt scene is a block with two superimposed fabled animals (A/5), a snake-tailed and winged griffin²⁴ and a snake-tailed sphinx: both figures stride in the same direction (south) as the previous ones, they do not interact, but rather seem to march next to each other following a sort of procession.

The way of representing the animals in two superimposed levels as being next to each other is evident at Karkemish in a master of the animals scene (Orthmann 1971, Karkemis E/1, from the Herald’s wall) or in a animals’ fight scene from the same site (ibidem: E/6). This graphic rendering is well known also in the 13th century BC Alaça Höyük orthostats (cf. Macridi 1908, slab 5) or in the Syrian ivory representations of animal groups. However the most similar orthostat was found in the cella of the storm god temple

two lion men (B/12 and B/25), or in the hand of hunters marching as in Karatepe B/3 and B/15.

²³ The arrangement of this scene in the corner of the town gate gives to the whole set a three dimensional effect which was probably not completely fortuitous, because also in the citadel gate, the same scene is located in a corner, indicating that although the iconographic themes were common to the whole Syro-Hittite world, the specific ‘corner arrangement’ seems to be more related to this single settlement.

²⁴ This Griffin reproduces local northern Levantine features, also visible in the Megiddo Ivories. (cf. in general Bisi 1965, 121-106, Orthmann 1971).

at Aleppo, where the fourth slab (Kohlmeyer 2000: Taf. 11) shows two animals (a sphinx and a lion) on two superimposed levels marching towards one direction: the arrangement is identical, only the presence of a marked soil level between them indicates a different stylistic, but not iconographic, rendering.

The presence of single fantastic animals just marching towards one direction and related to gate structures recurs in several other gates such as in Karkemish (the Water Gate: Aa/2, Ab/1; King's Gate: H/4; Processional Entry F/6), at Zincirli (in the citadel Gate both a griffin and a sphinx, B/21 and B/22, B/31), at Tell Halaf (Scorpion men at the so called Skorpionentor) so that the connection between the gate structure and 'monsters' is not only well known in the Syro-Hittite world, but is also represented with a variety of different 'monsters'. The sphinx²⁵ seems to have the same role as the griffin, to share with the griffin its supernatural origin and its connection to a wild and fantastic world. In this sense both animals find direct connections with the sphinxes (B/31 and in B/22) and the griffin (B/21) represented in the citadel gate as 'conducted' by a warrior, who evidently has 'domesticated' them: the animals are subdued by the human and also may, as a consequence, be favourable to the town. In this sense all wild and fantastic animals represented on orthostats at gates may imply the idea that wild and 'external' elements are favourable to the specific human act (i.e. the construction of the town) and thus to that specific town.²⁶

The following, fifth block bears the relief of a single rider (A/3) also heading towards the same direction. The man holds a bow²⁷ in his right hand, he wears a sword and raises with his left hand a severed head of probably an enemy. Mazzoni (1997, 319) has already emphasized that this scene is unique in the Early Iron Age iconography, combining together a riding soldier and the trophy of a severed head, a combination which could not be identified on representations of previous or contemporary phases (Figs. 2 and 5).

The iconographic theme of soldiers carrying severed heads as well as independent severed heads, is well known in Syro-Hittite representations such as the foot soldier carrying severed heads as at Tell Tayinat (Gate VII, probably end of the 8th beginning of the 7th century, cf. Harrison 2005: Fig.1), as well as those at Karkemish, both as booty carried by soldiers (C/10-14) in the Long Wall of sculpture (8th century), or as decorative element

²⁵ The sphinx and its connection to the world of the dead (Gilibert 2011a) does not appear to be a major point in this slab.

²⁶ Rykwert 2002, 158-160 has also pointed out the connections between sphinxes and monstrous animals and gates. The sphinx in particular may be the resulting animal of a specific possibly Egyptian cult according to which the first foreigner visiting the town was sacrificed and his head was buried underneath the threshold of the gate. The victim deified became then a guardian figure for the gate. For the origin and meaning of the Anatolian sphinx cf. Breyer 2010, 432-33, Gilibert 2001b.

²⁷ Only the upper part of the bow was preserved, while the bottom part has been reconstructed in the drawing. This reconstruction seems to be the only one possible according to what was preserved and to the common interpretation by scholars.

in the inscription of Suhi the 2nd.²⁸ The theme of the severed heads is well developed in Neo Assyrian reliefs²⁹, where it is frequent starting with Assurnasirpal the II and in some cases directly related to historic events.³⁰

Riders and soldiers sitting directly on the horse recur at Karatepe (as antithetic figures, as part of a procession or as simple soldiers), at Tell Halaf, Til Barsip, and at Maraş.³¹ In the majority of these representations the rider wears a bow or at least a quiver, and in those representations in which an action is visible, it is always related to war activities and enemy destruction, but while in the majority the riders are parading just showing themselves, in one case (Til Barsip A/2) the rider overwhelms an enemy, i.e. a proper action war scene is represented.

Thus in this case the image combines the representation of a riding soldier parading, with the scene of the foot soldiers carrying the severed head of the enemies. This combination did not become an iconographic standard in the representations, separating foot soldiers carrying heads on the one hand from riders either presenting themselves or in battle action. The other two riders from Zincirli (one found reemployed, K/4) but probably belonging to this gate and the other in the citadel gate (B/27) share with this slab similar features such as the general squat shape, the conical hat, and a bow or a quiver.

In other Syro-Hittite Gates the concept of victorious soldiers or of a strong army was represented in different ways: chariots running over the bodies of the enemies (as Karkemish C/5 and C/7, Tayinat 2, Til Barsip A/2), soldiers marching towards one specific direction (Karkemish H/5, C/14, F/1-3, Kültepe 1), soldiers in antithetic positions (Karatepe A/31-32, A/14). In none of these representations the narrative seems to refer to a specific event, rather it shows what belongs to the town: an army able to defend the town and brings its booty to the ruling dynasty.

The last preserved block on the eastern side of the entrance carries the image of a stag and a lion (A/9), also on two superimposed levels and also walking towards the south in a general arrangement as the sphinx and griffin of the third slab (A/5). Moreover both slabs are located not directly next to each other but on the same side of the entrance niche possibly suggesting on the one hand symmetry on the other a homogeneous movement.

²⁸ Two fragments from Tell Barsip showing heads carried by hand probably also belong to the 'scene' of soldiers marching with the severed heads of enemies.

²⁹ Radner 2011, Steinert 2012 especially for the Assyrian meaning related to decapitation, in general Bahrani 2008. For anthropological comparisons cf. Dye 2007, Dange 1992.

³⁰ As in the King of Elam relief, cf. Bonatz 2005.

³¹ Karatepe A/20, A/26, B/4, Maraş D/6, Til Barsip A/2, Tell Halaf A3/32-33, D/2.

Both Orthmann (1971) and Gilibert (2011a) reconstruct this scene as a third element belonging to the hunt scene as if the archer was hunting stags and lion at the same time.³² However, according to Humann's location of the orthostats this slab does not have a direct connection to the hunt scene, rather it reproduces a scheme identical to the two fantastic animals described above: two figures moving towards one direction next to each other. Moreover, although both the lion and the stag, are typical hunt prey and belong to the most common kind of hunt scenes represented in Syro-Hittite art, the two animals are never represented in the same hunt event, the lion is hunted with a bow³³ only in connection with the use of the chariot (due to the practical need of following the running animal), while Iron I representations prefer a lion hunt with a spear. On this subject we may observe that usually hunt scenes, although they have a direction (which is mainly given by the direction of the hunter), are aesthetically closed³⁴: the animal, bending its head toward the archer, at the side opposite to the hunter, or dogs turning towards the hunter redirect the look of the viewer towards the centre of the scene. This element seems then to support the idea that this slab was not part of a hunt scene, rather it should be considered as a single element: hunt prey animals, moving towards one direction.³⁵

Prey animals represented alone are not completely uncommon: in the citadel gate at Zincirli immediately to the left of the rider orthostats two blocks carry the representation of two animals, which Orthmann describes as wild goats, one just standing and the other standing and bending its head. There are no elements which may suggest that they were part of a more complex scene, rather they were just inserted in the series of figures. While passing lions are attested in Karkemish (Aa/2, Aa/1), Malatya (A/9a, A/5b), hoofed animals are more rare and we find them again at Karkemish (Ab/2) and in the Kleinorthostaten at Tell Halaf: here although the rearrangement prevents us to exclude that some of the animals were part of a more complex scene (such as hunt scenes), we may observe that the five gazelles (A3/82-85), two stags (A3/77-78), the three wild boars and two

³² In none of the hunt scenes found during the Iron Age or the Late Bronze Age the two animals were hunted on the same occasion.

³³ I think it is important to separate here hunt scenes from contest scenes: direct confrontations between a human and an animal, especially in a narrow fight, seem to belong to a different kind of scene, i.e. more to a contest scene rather than to a hunt scene.

³⁴ Also in very airy representations of hunt of the 4th Millennium as in the seal impression from Uruk BM131440, published by Watanabe 2002, Fig. 12, the animals, represented on two levels, which were the most far from the hunter were hit by arrows and one of them bends its head 'closing' the hunt scene.

³⁵ The Hunt scene from the King's Gate at Karkemish was found not in situ but displaced just next to the orthostats with the carved stag. This reconstruction, which would show a stag walking towards the archer shooting at another stag, allowed Gilibert 2011c to state that all orthostats were reemployed in the Gate and especially these two clearly indicate that a former hunt scene was not contextualized. Now, although it is impossible to prove one hypothesis or the other, it is worth to suggest that the hunt scene would be closed in one slab, while the stag as well as the marching lion in the same context may well be interpreted in the same way as in the Zincirli Gate.

fawns³⁶ represented in the Kleinorthostaten may well indicate that prey animals were part of the iconography of this period independently from hunt performances.

Thus the two animals, are one the one hand, the representation of the hunt trophy or prey, and on the other, as the two preceding fantastic animals (A/5) may indicate, the subdued wildness and the mastery of animals.³⁷

This is the most southern one of the eastern side. However the corner block of the tower was never found, so that we may not exclude that, following a pattern similar to the one of the citadel wall³⁸, also the corner block was carved and the facades of the tower was covered with plain ones.

West

On the western side of the entrance niche, to the left of the griffin slab mirroring the eastern one described above, only one further orthostat was found: two standing human figures face each other (A/6) and raise their opposite hands in what seems to be a specific gesture (Figs. 2 and 5). The standing men wear a long dress with a tassel (visible only on one), the hairs are tied together in a curl behind the neck, each holds a long staff with one hand and raise the other to the mouth or nose. The two men do not differ from each other in features useful to distinguish provenience or social status, except for the presence of a tassel. Because this scene does not find exact comparison with any other representation in the Iron Age or in earlier periods, it is important to distinguish here three elements, which seem to be of peculiar relevance: the general meanings of two standing humans facing each other, the role of the staff as a feature of a figure, and the specific gesture they perform.

A scene which includes two figures facing each other,³⁹ and not distinguishable from each other neither in their social status nor in their specific performance recurs in the Syro-Hittite iconography mainly in banquet scenes of a specific kind, in which the scene is dominated by two figures, there is no ‘celebration’ of one single figure (possibly the dead person), rather there is an act pursued by two figures (Bonatz 2000: type 2b) emphasising the bond between ‘ancestors’, cult scenes and the funerary meal. In earlier periods similar scenes are present in a few Late Bronze Age seals (Keel-Leu/Teissier 2004), where the human is doubled or, as in the stele of Ugarit, also where apparently identical persons

³⁶ None of them shows traces of being hunted as in other hunt scenes.

³⁷ For the mastery of animals in Anatolian LBA cf. Collins 2010, for the presence of prey animals at gates in Assyrian culture cf. Maul 2000.

³⁸ Cf. Blocks B/1-2 and B/13.

³⁹ Antithetic scenes obviously show two identical figures, but they reproduce a scheme well-known during the Bronze Age, which has nothing to do with a specific performance. To this group belong other scenes (as Karatepe A/31 for example) with standing figures facing each other without performing any gesture.

are located one in front of the other: these are all iconographic scenes whose meaning is still debated, and will be discussed in detail later in this article.

Several human figures standing and holding a long staff were found in the Syro-Hittite iconography pursuing different activities⁴⁰, and, especially at Zincirli, the man with the staff is also visible in one orthostat at the citadel gate in Zincirli (B/5): a man holding a staff and an ax follows the series of figures related to a larger scene which will be discussed in detail at the end of this paragraph. Moreover the staff is also frequently employed as an attribute of men in funerary banquet scenes (cf. Bonatz 2000, 76). The man holding a staff is generally interpreted as a ruler. Orthmann (1971, 291) states that the long stick never appears in non-royal figures, while Bonatz (Bonatz 2000, 76-78) convincingly suggests that probably from a certain moment onwards it was not characterizing only the ruler but eventually also members of the elite. According to this, the orthostat would then represent two rulers who are distinguishable only from the presence of the tassel: as a matter of fact, the combination of the staff with the tassel seems to be rarer and Bonatz suggests that this element may eventually be interpreted as belonging only to the rulers. In our case it is not clear if the absence of the tassel on one of the figures is related to the position of the figure, which is then turned on the opposite side, and consequently may not be a distinguishing element.

The two figures raise opposite hands up to their nose in a very similar gesture: the hand of the left figure is represented as an open claw closed on the top by a horizontal line. It is possible to compare this rendering of the hand with the hand of the seated figure in a fragment from Maraş (Pergamon Museum VA15208, described in Orthmann 1971: Maraş D/6), where the seated woman holds in one hand what looks like a cup, with the gesture in the banquet scene from Örtülü,⁴¹ or the same gesture in the banquet scene from Karaburçlu,⁴² all three sites very near to Zincirli: it seems evident that this way of closing the hand with an horizontal line was a local way to represent a hand holding a cup or something to eat. While this kind of representation appear certain for the left figure, the right figure seems more difficult because both in the drawing and in the photo, there are some traces of lines which may eventually indicate fingers, i.e. a closed hand, implying a difference in gesture. However, considering that different gestures could not be possibly

⁴⁰ Figures with long staff, standing and doing nothing (statues): Ain Arab 1(SPHII) also with bent arms; figures with long staff and announcing themselves (i.e. speaking): Çiftlik (with inscription, SPHIII), Karkemish K/28), SPHII; Tuleil 2 (SPHIII); figures with long staff and drinking: Darende (Figure on the lion, holding a staff and probably one raised hand with cup, while the libating figure on the lion has a staff, but curved, inserted in the belt) (SPHII/III); figures with long staff and going somewhere: Zincirli tree of life slab found near area 7 (Schloen and Fink 2009b, 215, probably to be dated to the SPHIIIb, cf. following paragraph), Karkemish G/5 (Royal Buttress) SPHIII (the figure with the sceptre introduces a second one which seems to hold a long staff), Zincirli B/5 (the figures holds a staff and a sceptre).

⁴¹ <http://www.hittitemonuments.com/ortulu/>, Bonatz 2000: C/26.

⁴² Bonatz 2000: C/32.

related to such minor dissimilarities, it seems to support the idea that they are both performing exactly the same movement: holding a cup and raising them towards their mouth.

This hypothesis may find some support comparing it with the banquet scene (B/3) at the citadel gate: u-shaped hands hold something (again rendered by a simple horizontal line closing the top) and bring it towards the mouth in front of a table.⁴³ They do not differ in social status but in gender, they do not differ in their role in the specific performance and they sit. The banquet table between them has been inserted squeezing it between the two figures and due to a lack of space has been located slightly higher, as if the two figures were of more relevance than the central table.

Although the standing position of the figures in the town gate slab seems to be the main difference from the usually seated positions of most part of the figures in banquet funerary scenes, it seems not to be a definitive element in determining the nature (deceased or alive) of the represented persons⁴⁴. Thus, comparing these two slabs it is possible to state some similarities (two figures in front of each other performing the same gesture) and many differences (they sit and do not stand, there is a table between them, they are socially distinguishable per gender and attributes)⁴⁵ which prevent a sure identification with this iconography. However, in an attempt to consider the banquet scene of the citadel wall not only as a closed element but as the arrival point of a procession of three figures marching towards it (Zincirli B/4-5), it is possible to reconsider the general meaning of the whole three orthostats and eventually compare it with our slab. One of the three figures marching towards the south holds a staff and has a dress with a tassel, and consequently seems to be the leading figure, two other figures march in front of him, one with short dress and the other smaller in scale: Bonatz (2014, 211) clearly pointed out that the figures may represent members of the divine family, son and successor and the banquet scene is a feast to which the royal couple partook, emphasizing the meaning of a ‘dynastic parade’ (Mazzoni 1997), eventually the dynastic stability over time and the guarantee of continuity. This element would then put aside the problem of a funerary or non-funerary meal, or to be more precise its relationship to the ancestor cult, rather it would emphasize continuity and dynastic strength.

⁴³ Also the hands of figures with raised arms like the mountains gods in Ayn Dara are represented in the same u-shaped way, as well as in another example at the citadel gate in Zincirli (B/18), where the u-shape of the hands was interpreted as holding a musical instrument. This feature suggests that the u-shape was generally used to render hands in profile especially during the early period of the Iron Age. In later periods the hand holding a cup for example is deformed to hold the specific bowl in the so-called grave stele also from Zincirli (K/2) or on a second fragmentary inscription (K/8).

⁴⁴ Usually the deceased is represented seated while the officiant is standing. However in a few examples like the stela in Maraş or the statues the deceased is also standing. Cf. Bonatz 2000, 108.

⁴⁵ In this case the man seems to have next to him a long staff.

2d. Further random blocks found nearby, possibly belonging to the monument

A ninth⁴⁶ block (K/4) found reemployed in a house is so similar in dimension, style, iconographic arrangement to the ones of the southern gate that it seems most likely to have belonged (Fig. 2 and 4) to the same monument. It represents a rider, identical to the one carrying the head, except for the trophy. It is very similar to the same rider represented in the citadel gate and due to the comparative pieces mentioned above would perfectly belong to the concept of mounted soldier parading and showing the strength of the ruling class. Its reconstruction in Fig. 4 is based only on similarities to the citadel gate example.

The sphinx protome (K/8), found scattered in the field south of the gate, as well as the orthostat with the tree of life discovered in 2008 (Schloen and Fink 2009b), also from the same area seem not to belong to the gate: the sphinx is an unfinished vertical element (possibly of a jamb) which due to its condition cannot be dated, but which is very similar to the unfinished Yesemek sphinxes.⁴⁷ The final destination of both the sphinx and the lion found on the acropolis remain unknown, as well as their chronological setting, however there are no clues to ascribe the sphinx to the southern gate.

The orthostat with the tree of life and standing figure differs completely in style but not in dimensions (1.25 high and 90 large) from those of the southern gate, but it is also an orthostat with a homogeneous thickness and not a carved block with a wedged back: these two very different image carriers require completely different architectural arrangements and the contemporary use of carved blocks and slabs in the same monument seems not to occur. This second orthostat belongs most likely to the sacred building excavated in Area 7 just outside of the settlement south of the southern gate (cf. Schloen and Fink 2009b 215), and thus to a much later period,⁴⁸ but with a direct iconographic link to the town gate (standing figure with a long staff, see above).

⁴⁶ Von Luschan 1902 published this carved orthostat as the ninth belonging to the gate.

⁴⁷ Gilibert 2011a dates this element as well as the unfinished portal lion found on the acropolis to a possible Late Bronze Age occupation, which the archaeological evidence seems to exclude.

⁴⁸ Especially the way the tree of life is represented seems to indicate a direct connection with the trees of life in the Sagçagözü orthostats (A/1 and A/9), which Orthmann dates to the SPHIIIb period, and is completely different from the tree of life represented in the citadel gate (B/17) and dated to the SPHII. This kind of representation of the tree of life seems to be related on the one side to coastal rendering of the second Millennium (cf. Kepinski 1982: cat. 766 and ff.), and to become common in the Zincirli area. I thank Prof. Bonatz, who will publish this orthostat and provided me with important information.

3. DESIGNING AND USING THE SPACE

3a. The town gate and the citadel gate: a single conceptual plan

Having presented the iconographic and architectural features of the monument as single elements, it is important to consider the whole monument in its topographic setting and the strict connections between this gate and the citadel gate. Both monuments were only 160 meters apart from each other, so that once entering the southern town gate, assuming that all doors were open, it was possible to reach the citadel gate in less than 10 minutes' walk. Although both gate structures are not on the same axis, the door of the citadel wall was visible from the internal town wall: the citadel gate structure was slightly elevated and had a layout and an extent identical to the internal town gate.

The very regular circle of the town wall (Fig. 1), the regularly placed accesses (at similar distance) indicate a planning which was not influenced by an already established lower town or natural topography, rather a decided planning (Casana et al. 2010, 71) of a space (the lower town), which should be separated from the external area. Moreover, several works performed to drain the water outside the lower town and outside the town wall mark also the intention to modify the terrain in order to obtain a dry lower town with a specific shape.

The plan of the town wall and its accesses implies a specific relation to the citadel wall and especially to the only direct axis which connected the town gate to the citadel gate. This element becomes especially evident when we compare the architectural and iconographic components of the southern internal town- and citadel-gates (Fig. 5).

Both gates have a similar architectural structure with towers protruding into the courtyard, in both gates the first entering door was guarded by double figures so that the onlooker approaching the gates walked in a space flanked by towers and faced an entrance flanked by symmetric figures: two to be seen on the front (the griffins in the southern gate and the gods with hammer in the citadel gate) and two to be seen while passing the entrance (in both cases lions, Fig. 4). In both cases the standing figures visible from the courtyard are not 'entering the gate' rather they are directed towards the east. Both in the town and citadel gates (Fig. 5) the hunt scenes are located in a corner, extend over several blocks, and although both scenes are oriented towards the same direction, both are aesthetically 'closed' by the movement of the last animal (see above). Griffin and sphinx march together with the other figures, evidently subjugated in the citadel gate (winged griffin with warrior, sphinxes with warrior) and apparently marching as trophies in the southern gate, as well as identical winged genii with raised arms (in both structures but in different positions) suggest the uniformity in themes and intents in the arrangement of both gates.

The military theme of the soldier parading and overwhelming the enemy is in the citadel gate represented by a chariot overrunning a dead enemy, or by one foot soldier or a single rider parading, while in the town gate it is the rider bringing the head, in both cases the enemy is defeated. The banquet scene in the citadel gate (B/3) with the couple eating is located in a similar position as the orthostat with the two men facing each other (see discussion above) and probably suggests a similar meaning related to “secure dynastic sequence and consequent stability” (Fig. 5)⁴⁹.

According to these interpretations the images related to the ‘human’ sphere and concerning political peace, defeat of the wild and the enemy, the control and cooperation with monstrous and ferocious forces, and consequently the support of supernatural elements, seem to encircle with a single movement the space between the towers in both structures. The similar architectural and ‘decorative’ arrangement establishes a direct connection between both gates and an iconographic discourse connected to the gates, which seems to be related to a tradition at least locally well established.

Moreover the citadel gate hosts an additional iconographic level, consisting of several slabs representing gods exiting from the entrance, i.e. relating to the monument in a similar way as the scenes presented above: the gods follow the same movement as the other figures marching on the eastern tower towards the south. In the southern town gate, the divine world is completely absent, a feature which may be related to the state of preservation of the decorative components (at least 4 slabs are missing from the western tower) or to an intentional decision to relate the divine level only to the entrance of the acropolis. As a matter of fact the only other similar processions of gods in Syro-Hittite towns are always related to accesses to the acropolis or upper palace as in Karkemish (Long Wall of Sculpture) possibly indicating different levels of accessibility as known from second millennium textual sources (Miller 2011).

Furthermore, two different movements characterize both monuments: on the one hand, the movement of the images symmetric to the passage and, on the other, the movement of all other figures. The two griffins (A/4 and A/2) at the town gate, the two lion headed genii and the chariot scene and the god (B/1 and B/13 on the towers and B/10 and B/23 near the passage) at the citadel gate are oriented from the point of view of the onlooker (entering the gate) towards the east, i.e. paired figures were positioned symmetrically to the entrance with the feet directed towards the east preferring a point of view ‘en face’ for both gates. The other figures instead both in the citadel and in the town gate are all exiting from the gate accompanying the movement of people out of the gate.

Thus, the general architectural and iconographic arrangement of both southern accesses at Zincirli displays strong similarities, similar dimensions and design and indicates that the arrangement of the scenes followed a specific ‘narrative’ program.

⁴⁹ Gilibert 2011a also pointed out the “mind map” especially for this orthostat and its relation to the figures immediately preceding this orthostat, which are discussed above.

3b. Dating the monument

The date of construction of the southern gate and consequently of the foundation of the lower town was and still is debated. All slabs were made of the same stone, had very similar heights (1.25-1.35 m) and were certainly carved as belonging to the same monument. All scholars (Orthmann 1971, Mazzoni 1994, ead. 1997, Gilibert 2011b) who analysed these slabs agreed in considering them as the product of one period, of one school and one of the most ancient examples of the Syro-Hittite art, to be ascribed most probably to the second half of the 10th century BC.

Orthmann dates the lion protome (A/1) to a slightly later period than the orthostats, although he does not discuss this specific piece in the text, while Gilibert (Gilibert 2011c, 191) ascribes this piece to the same period as the other orthostats of the gate, i.e. to the 10th century. The mane, the position of the ears, the rounded head and the quite open mouth, the horizontal straight whiskers and the very rounded eyes, are all elements which seem to ascribe this object to the early Iron Age style of portal lions as those in gate Q or in the lions' base (E/1) from Zincirli itself. It is quite difficult to establish any other clear dating for this piece, since elements like the mane or the paws, which are considered definitive to stylistically ascribe a piece, are completely missing. The size of the lion finds parallels with the Ain Dara (A/1), Hama (Buhl and Riis 1990, 44-45 no. 19, 50-51 no. 40) and Maraş gate lions, all jambs which exceed three metres in length. Considering these elements and the poor state of preservation of the fragment, it seems not possible to assign a period of production of the lion different from the one of the remaining carved blocks.

Several scholars⁵⁰ identified the second half of the 10th century not only with the period of production of the carved blocks but also with the time of construction of the gateway, consequently suggesting that the lower town of Zincirli was planned since the beginning, and not the result of a progressive growth. By contrast during recent excavations at Zincirli it became evident that most part of the materials from the acropolis and from the lower town belonged to an Iron Age II horizon, so that it has been suggested that the whole town was founded only at end of the 9th century BC (Herrmann and Schloen in print).⁵¹ Due to this discrepancy and to the fact that only the style of the orthostats would support such an early dating for the construction of the southern gate, it has recently been suggested that the carved blocks were brought to Zincirli from another Late Bronze and early Iron Age site in the region, such as for example Pañçarlı Höyük (Schloen and Fink 2009a).

⁵⁰ Von Luschan 1902, Pucci 2008a, Orthmann 1971, Mazzoni 1997.

⁵¹ In the area of the southern gate it is very difficult to establish a pottery sequence related to the sequence of street floors, so that no definitive statement could be made as far as the archaeological material is concerned. Moreover it should be noted that the presence of a marsh for a period of at least 80 years makes a clear statement on stratigraphic deposits difficult.

At this site villagers in the early 1930'ies discovered “a batch of sculptures while ploughing” documented by von der Osten (1930). He describes two carved slabs, which he says belong to different stylistic groups and one fragment of a lion in high relief, but he published the picture of only one slab (von der Osten 1930, Fig. 63), which was also later re-photographed by Bossert (1942: Fig. 818) while the others remain unknown.⁵² The only published orthostat depicts a hero with prey with double curl behind the back as in the weather god representations in the citadel gate (B/14) The preserved height of the only published orthostat is 1.08 m, and considering that the block is broken and the lower part of the legs and the feet missing, we may reconstruct a height of 1.40/50, i.e. similar to the blocks found in the southern gate. While its style is similar in the rendering of the skirt, it is very different for the arrangement of the figures and the empty spaces left on the slab. Although it is evident that the published carvings belong to the same artistic environment as the relief from Zincirli and also the two slabs found in Islahiye (Orthmann 1971, Pl. 14,b and c), it seems difficult to determine any presence of Early Iron Age settlement without archaeological or architectural evidence.

Moreover when carved orthostats are re-employed in a building different from their original locations (as the Kleinorthostaten in the Tempel Palast at Tell Halaf, the blocks in the cella of the temple in Aleppo, the carved blocks in the Lions' Gate at Malatya⁵³, the blocks in the Water Gate at Karkemish), the re-employing and re-contextualizing of the images is evident: the image still carries meaning but due to its re-placing loses part of its original significance. Because the original symbolism is no longer the main element in the general assemblage, it is easy to recognize when they were reused: corner slabs are employed on sides (as in Halaf, cf. Novák and Novák 1994), complex scenes are torn apart (Karkemish Kings gate, cf. Gilibert 2011b), and blocs are reassessed in irregular positions (Arslantepe, Delaporte 1940), blocks with stylistically extremely different carvings are put next to each other (Aleppo temple, Kohlmeyer et al. 2005). None of these clues is visible in the orthostats of the southern gate.

By contrast the analysis of the contexts of the orthostats shows a strong uniformity in the iconographic programme of the citadel and the town gate: not only the iconographic consistency inside the same monument is important (which is difficult when the narrative is based on single scenes added the one to the other), rather the uniformity and consistency with the iconographic programme of the citadel gate seems to definitely exclude the possibility of the reuse of these slabs.⁵⁴ Because both gates have been conceived and ‘decorated’ as belonging to one single programme, scholars may need to review either the

⁵² However the fact that this and possibly several other carved slabs were found “scattered in a hole” at the site of Pançarli would need further archaeological investigations; brief visits at the site did not provide any further information..

⁵³ The idea that the orthostats found in the Lions' Gate were reemployed from former structures has been suggested since their first publication. Cf. Dussaud 1944/45: 121, Alvaro 2014, 87.

⁵⁴ A different hypothesis would be that all slabs were all reused in both structures, which is a *lectio difficilior* considering that no earlier gates have been found yet.

stylistic date of the carved slabs or the date of the pottery production in that area during the 10th and 9th century BC, or find a compromise between the two dates, or again support the idea that these orthostats are voluntarily archaizing. In this contribution I prefer to retain a date to Iron Age I, possibly to the end of the 10th and beginning of the 9th century BC, because both style, iconographic themes and relation to the blocks are archaic, their later production still needs to be proved, while the local pottery production⁵⁵ of the 10th and beginning of the 9th centuries still needs to be better understood.⁵⁶

3c. Length of use

Three different stone street floors, which were excavated in 2012 and 2013, all located inside the lower town and all connected to the step described above indicate the length of use of the gate. These three street pavements show a raise of approximately 25 cm of the soil level in the lower town which consequently slightly changed the slope of the “street/square”. The reasons for these re-pavings are not related to the wear of the floors (which were perfectly preserved) but probably to the sagging of the street and open space just north of the gate, causing probably water stagnation and difficult accessibility. It is not possible to compute in years how many generations went by for each floor, but considering the remakes and the smaller repairs and the durability of the material employed, it could cover with no problem several centuries. However we can definitely state that the latest occupation of the lower town followed a destruction of the area and took place during or after the second half of the 7th century (*terminus post quem*): during this reoccupation, the gate area was a mere opening, a breach, a pathway running 50 cm above the level of the threshold probably amidst collapsed structures.⁵⁷

4. TRADITION AND INNOVATION OF THE GATE ARRANGEMENT

4a. The building

Town walls were frequently used as single symbols for the whole town (Mielke 2011, Cancik-Kirschbaum 2011), and the gates represented the places where the worlds, which the wall kept separated, met: the space inside and near the gate carried specific meanings

⁵⁵ I thank dr. Soldi, who is responsible for the ceramic analysis of the current excavations, for the stimulating discussion and the information.

⁵⁶ It is also possible to imagine, as Schloen and Herrmann (in print) suggest, that the lower town was walled but not densely built during the Iron Age I, as it is the case in third millennium Kranzhügeln or in Mari (cf. Margueron 2004). This reconstruction would explain the paucity of finds clearly datable to the Iron Age I.

⁵⁷ Also the structures built direct to the north of the gate as well as the building materials employed in this area during this latest phase seem to witness a period of decay of the lower town.

and fulfilled also several functions. While Mesopotamian texts (Cancik-Kirschbaum 2011) clearly indicate that gates were spaces, where not only administrative and jurisdictional functions were carried out, but also where the triumphing king celebrated specific ritual performances, in the Hittite world (Miller 2011) the gate (of the town or of the palace) hosted the images of the winning king, or of purifying rituals connected to royal authority. Syro-Hittite texts concerning the functions of the gate are absent, so that we may interpret its role solely from the archaeological evidence.

The typical layout of Late Bronze Age Syrian gate structures as well as the double enceinte wall, which was common already in Hittite architecture, fulfills military and defensive functions, well-known already in the second millennium BC. However, if we consider the rooms and structure of the Anatolian gates in comparison to the north Syrian ones, it appears evident that not only the Zincirli gates but in general all Syro-Hittite gates interpret space division in the gate following a north Syrian single chambered gate model rather than an Anatolian one, preferring a broad passage room⁵⁸ instead of a narrower passage and of additional spaces in the gate structure.⁵⁹ The size (550 m²) of the internal single chambered town gate at Zincirli is bigger than the average double chambered gates in the Hittite capital (they range from 280 m² of the upper western gate to the 400 of the Kings' gate) or the single chambered ones as at Alişar Höyük (also approx. 395 m²) or Alaça Höyük (390 m²). This tendency towards enlargement of single chambered gates seems to be common in the new constructions of the 10th and 9th centuries BC, as also the citadel gate at Zincirli extends for approximately the same size (530m²), or the gigantic south gate at Halaf (900 m²).⁶⁰ Moreover if we consider that the whole southern gate in Zincirli occupied a surface of around 1150 m², that the layout of the outer gate was planned to leave more space in the internal courtyard 3 (see above), and that the carved reliefs were all visible from this space, we may state that this courtyard fulfilled specific functions (Fig. 3): it surely had defensive function, allowing also a chariot to stop and park and specific controlling activities. The gate K-6 at Tilmen Höyük (which is very close to Zincirli), offers an interesting comparison in the area, not for the layout but mainly for the presence of lions' jambs at the entrance, apparently following the same tradition as the much later guardian figures: however, the enormous difference in dimensions and layout of the structures makes them difficult to compare.⁶¹

⁵⁸ The passage room in this gate extends over 108 m² in contrast to the narrow passages typical in Anatolian architecture.

⁵⁹ For the Hittite gates cf. Naumann 1971, Puchstein 1912; Levantine and north Syrian ones: Gregori 1986, Mazar 1995, Kempinski 1992.

⁶⁰ The extent is calculated in relationship to the impact of the monument in the general urban topography, not considering the number of broad chambers to be passed.

⁶¹ The gate at Tilmen (K-6/K-1) is composed by two very different gate structures without passage room. The lions were found on the most external one (K-6), the space between the gates was limited by a wall probably connecting both structures (cf. Alkim 1962: 481, Duru 2003, Marchetti 2006, Fig. 2). K-6 at Tilmen covers an extent of approximately 108 m².

Moreover, the iconographic programme facing the courtyard between the gates (which extends over 400 m²) and the area between the internal towers (40 m²) seems to suggest not only symbolic meanings related directly to the passage from the outside to the inside (such as guarding figures, apotropaic animals), but also and mainly a ‘presentation’ of the town, its ruling class, strength and object of gods’ favour. The movement of the figures for the person exiting from the gate and the antithetic figures for the person willing to enter the gate from the courtyard may also be related to specific ritual performances connected to routes and processions, during which the gate was considered a major stop. In this sense the courtyard in between represents a specific space in part already inside the town along a route which leads to the palace area (J and K), a route with several stops built and planned for the exaltation of the city and of the local power (Pucci 2008a, 170-72).⁶²

4b. The iconographic themes of the southern town gate and their precedents

When dealing with one among the very few decorated structures of the formative period of the Syro-Hittite town centres, its relationship to former cultures and consequently its cultural links to iconography in Anatolia or Syria during the Late Bronze Age gain relevance in understanding the process of cultural formation.

Assuming that iconographic components and the structure itself should not be considered separately, the gate at Alaça Höyük represents the best comparison known from the Hittite period, together with the Water Gate⁶³ and the Kings’ Gate at Karkemish and possibly the ‘Hittite’ gate at Malatya dating to the beginning of the Iron Age⁶⁴: all these structures are possibly dated to a period prior to the Zincirli town gate, and some of them may well represent a bridge between the Hittite period and the Syro-Hittite one.

Decorated town or citadel gates do appear only in the Anatolian world during the second millennium BC, and at Alaça Höyük, which is the only example of Hittite gate with carved orthostat decoration, the carved slabs were located in the same position as the Zincirli ones, i.e. along the sides of the protruding towers, while roofed passage rooms never hosted carved reliefs. This feature characterizes all Syro-Hittite gates except for

⁶² No additional elements such as further rooms or installations indicate that administrative or archival functions were fulfilled here.

⁶³ Scholars seem to agree to date the water gate to the 11th century BC (Mazzoni 2000a, Gilibert 2011c, 160-161), and the kings’ gate decoration to the 10th century BC.

⁶⁴ At Malatya two gate structures are said to belong to the second millennium: the large gate of period V dated to the very end of MBA (cf. Alvaro 2014: Fig. 4 period V) and the ‘Syrian’ gate of period IV (which Pecorella 1975 called ‘imperial’). The most ancient decorated orthostats, which possibly belonged to the gates of period IV) were found reemployed in the IIa period gate, so that their original asset remains unknown. Orthmann (1971, Malatya A/3-11) dates these reliefs to the SPH II (?), Hawkins (2000, 318-321) dates them to the 11th/10th century BC.

Karatepe, which was not only built in a later period following a slightly different layout, but also presents a much broader iconographic programme.

Old themes, same meaning: the wild and fantastic creatures

Placing a guardian figure at the entrance of a town or of a built complex is a tradition, which definitely begins during the second millennium BC, when architectural elements were transformed into carrier of iconographic meanings, and seems to be related initially to the Anatolian cultural sphere. The first appearances of protomes at the gates seem to be related to the rearrangement of the gates at two sites, i.e. at the capital (Hattusha) and at Alaça Höyük and to the sporadic findings of portal lions also related to the Hittite culture.⁶⁵ At the time when the three gates at Hattusha and the one at Alaça⁶⁶ were erected (probably second half of the 13th century BC) the use of protomes of sphinxes and lions was well established: at Alaça Höyük as well as at the lions' gate at Hattusha the guardian figures are rendered only in their foreparts and as a protome applied to the jamb, while in the sphinx gate at Hattusha the whole figure develops on the entire jamb, transforming an architectural element, the jamb, into an entirely carved figure. Other, several portal lions were found at different sites or in different contexts in Anatolia⁶⁷ suggesting that there was a flourishing local production at least in the late Hittite empire. Their arrival in north Syria is clearly witnessed by the two lions found in Alalakh, dated also to the 13th century and ascribed to the Hittite period of occupation at the site.⁶⁸ While in second millennium Anatolia the sphinxes seem to be the 'main' animals used at gates,⁶⁹ several lions connected to pivot stones seem to suggest the wide use also of this animal, which then became

⁶⁵ The copper lions found at Mari, dated to the early second millennium BC and located in the cella of one of the temples at Mari (cf. Parrot 1936/37), could be suggested as forerunners of guardian figures, although their location in the interior of the door prevent a secure interpretation.

⁶⁶ The date of the construction of the Alaça Höyük gate to the second half of the 13th century is not accepted by all scholars (contra Schachner 2012: 140, who dates it to the 16th century BC), however the arguments suggested for a date to the reign of Tudkhaliya IV seem to fit best the general idea and the necessary economic organization behind the erection of a monumental gate (Taracha 2011 and 2012).

⁶⁷ Among others: the three portal lions found 80 metres to the south of the sphinx gate at Alaça, were probably protomes (although the photos are not clear) and unfinished (Perrot and Chipiez 1887, 659-665, Arik 1937, Figs. 27-28 and 25): at least one of them includes a pivot stone, suggesting that they were located in a different monument (their date is extremely uncertain); the lions found at the quarry of Hapis Boğazı (Summers and Özen 2012) indicate that there was an active production of similar objects, as well as the portal lions at Harran (Lloyd and Brice 1951, Pl. IX, 3) and the lion portal stone from Havuzköy near Sivas (Boehmer 1967, 132-141), while the lion fragments found at Hattusha (Neve 1993, Figs. 112 and 116) may eventually belong to column bases.

⁶⁸ They were located at the entrance of the temple of phase 1b (cf. Woolley 1955, 867 and Fink 2010: photo 7).

⁶⁹ This element may eventually also suggest that the tradition of guardian figures to accesses derived from the Egyptian tradition (Mazzoni 1984).

dominant as guardian figure during the Iron age⁷⁰, besides bulls (Zincirli citadel gate), and in later periods (but employed more as column bases in porticos) sphinxes (Hilani III at Zincirli) or scorpion men (Tell Halaf, Skorpionentor).

The aggressive nature of these animals (especially the lions) would ward off evil and invite good things to enter the town, thus they are apotropaic and protective, in a similar way as Mesopotamian statues at doorways were located “to repel enemies on the level of reality and ward off evil spirits on the supernatural level” (Watanabe 2002, 124). The idea that animals related to the wild or underworld become allies in defending the access to the town is inevitably related on the one hand, to the idea that these are subjugated to the town (control over the wild and underworld) and, on the other, that wild/fantastic animals are the only figures able to guard liminal spaces between controlled (the town) and uncontrolled worlds (the outside, wild world).⁷¹

Fantastic and wild animals not located on jambs, rather represented on orthostats fulfilled a slightly different function or meaning, as emphasized above: they are not intended to scare off the entering evils, because they are inserted in a general movement of other figures and scenes and consequently are part of a different narrative: the sphinxes and griffins in particular as represented at the southern town gate and in the citadel gate belong to the realm of the dominated wild and fantastic forces, and they do not have an apotropaic function related to the act of entering the walled space; rather they symbolize the subjugated forces of the underworld (cf. above). Therefore they parade together with the other animals and prey. This kind of meaning is completely absent in the more ancient iconographic programme of gates, which limited wild and fantastic elements to the guardian function.

Old themes, new meanings: the hunt

Stefania Mazzoni has already analysed the relationship between hunt scenes and Syro-Hittite gates, marking their symbolic meaning as a dominion over the wild world. Very frequently Syro-Hittite hunt scenes at gates have been connected to the representations of hunt at Alaça Höyük, where three hunt scenes are represented on the front sides of the towers. Taracha⁷² has shown that these scenes, especially those representing the hunt with the bow, are strictly related to the tutelary Hittite god Kurunti-ya and represent a

⁷⁰ The connection between gate and lions in particular occur also at second millennium Mycenae, however that specific scene seems to be related to heraldic/antithetic scenes, well-known since the third millennium BC. The two lions reconstructed at the entrance gate of one of the circular pre-pottery Neolithic structures at Göbekli Tepe remain an unicum and cannot be considered as a forerunner.

⁷¹ Rykwert 2002: suggests that sphinxes may be related to the custom of sacrificing a foreigner at the gate and burying the head underneath the threshold. For this reason the animal would have had its peculiar appearance.

⁷² 2011 and idem 2012 reinterprets the iconographic program. The first publication of the orthostats: Makridi 1908, and the first reassessment cf. Bossert 1942.

specific feature of this god. Thus in this sense the hunt scene at Alaça and also in the other Hittite representations was related to a strict religious meaning, to the triad of gods represented in the gate and to the political role which this tutelary god had during the time of Tudkhaliya IV. The hunter is in these examples a god and the performance is then narrowly connected to the libation scenes located at the top of the Alaça western tower (Taracha 2012, 114). The divine sphere is kept only in the representation of the tutelary god and hunter in the Aleppo cella (Kohlmeyer 2000, Pl. 15), which is represented with its attributes but in a hunting action.

Foot hunt⁷³ scenes at the southern gate of Zincirli as well as in the citadel gate and in other Syro-Hittite towns seem to be extremely different: first the hunter is neither divine

⁷³ This table lists all foot hunt scenes from Hittite orthostats and bowls and Syro-Hittite orthostats excluding contest, antithetic scenes. The SPH periodization refers to Orthmann 1971, the date is suggested by the author, or in case of the Hittite production refers to Taracha 2012.

Object	Who	How	What	Date	Building
Taprammi Bowl	Standing man	Bow and bait	Stag	13 th cent. BC	
Taprammi Bowl	Man standing, short skirt	Spear	Wild boar	13 th cent. BC	
Alaça 14-15	Kneeling man	Bow and bait	Stag	13 th cent. BC	Gate
Alaça 14	Kneeling man	Bow	Wild boar	13 th cent. BC	Gate
Alaça 20	Standing man and dogs	Spear/sword?	Lion	13 th cent. BC	Gate
Hattusha, seal	Kneeling man	Bow	Stag	15 th -13 th cent. BC	
Karkemish H/6	Standing man	Bow	2 stags	SPH II (10/9 th)	King's Gate open scene
Zincirli A/7-8	Standing/running man	Bow and dog	1 stag	SPH I/II (10/9 th)	
Zincirli B/6+7+8	Standing man	Bow	2 stags	SPH II (beg. 9 th)	Burgtor
Halaf A3/51	Standing man	Dagger	Lion	SPH II/III (8 th BC)	Kleinorthostaten
Halaf A3/52	Standing man	Bow	Antelope	SPH II/III (8 th BC)	Kleinorthostaten
Karatepe A/3	Standing man	Bow	Lion	SPH III (7 th BC)	North Gate
Karatepe A/29	Standing man	Bow	Lion	SPH III (7 th BC)	North Gate
Saççagözü B/1	Two standing men	Spears	Lion	SPH III (7 th BC)	Combined with chariot
Saççagözü B/2	Standing man	Spear	Lion	SPH III (7 th BC)	
Halaf A3/52	Standing man	Bow	Lion	SPH II/III (8 th BC)	Kleinorthostaten
Halaf Ba/1	Standing man	Bow	Bull	SPH II/III (8 th BC)	Kapara TP entrance
Halaf Ba/6	Standing man	Bow	Stag	SPH II/III (8 th BC)	Kapara TP entrance
Halaf Bc/2	Standing man	Bow	Goat	SPH II/III (8 th BC)	Kapara TP entrance

nor socially marked, the hunt never takes place with bait, the bow is the preferred weapon, and the lion is the preferred prey⁷⁴. The hunt scene which very frequently develops over several slabs is not thematically related to the other representations on the gate and seems not to be related to a specific god as was the case in 13th century Anatolia.

Therefore we may here see a shift in meaning: if the Hittite hunt scenes are related to a specific ritual event and a single god, hunt scenes in Syro-Hittite town centres seem to be strictly connected to the pure action of hunting, i.e. of stalking specific wild animals, where the hero is a human being, shifting the meaning of the scene from a divine/ritual level during the Hittite period to a more royal or civic level during the Early Iron Age.⁷⁵

New themes: the soldier/war

Representation of victorious soldiers carrying the dismembered parts of the enemy does not belong to the Hittite tradition; it is rather connected to the Syrian tradition of the second millennium: soldiers marching and carrying severed heads are typical in second millennium iconographic representation in Syria⁷⁶ and is a theme well-known in second millennium Mesopotamian texts (cf. Charpin 1994). Moreover, the theme of war and victorious ruler in general is well-known in Syria and Mesopotamia in seals and stela since the third millennium, as well as the concept of dismembering the enemy to hinder his afterlife (cf. Steinert 2012, 137-138). The warrior king or war god representation at the King's Gate at Hattusha seems to belong to a different symbolic sphere: although the divine warrior or warrior king is well-known in Hittite iconography (Bonatz 2007), in this only example in a gate, occupies a rather "offset" position: he is located on a jamb as the guardian figure, but it faces the internal area and consequently it was visible only for those exiting from the gate. Thus, it seems not directly connected to the celebration of the military power, rather more probably to the internal space of the gate itself.⁷⁷

The connection between war representations or military strength and the gates appears first in Karkemish with soldiers marching and carrying severed heads (B/45a) on the Long Wall of Sculptures as well as in one orthostat at the Kings' gate with warriors

⁷⁴ Probably the disappearance of the wild boar may be also related to the geographic difference between the Anatolian plateau and the north Syrian area, where probably the wild boar was not very common.

⁷⁵ Chariot hunt scenes seem to refer to a different model: these were also represented in gates since the beginning (probably Malatya B/1 and B/2, Karkemish K/26 and K/27) and flank 'foot' hunt scenes. This kind of hunt is according to Orthmann (Orthmann 1971, 420-21) very standardized and we may add that is very similar in the setting to war chariot scenes: instead of the dog there is a corpse underneath the animal. Their origin may be related to Egypt (as Orthmann affirms), but finds its definition in these early stages of the Early Iron Age. The symbolism may be similar to the foot hunt scenes although the presence of the chariot relates the performance to an elite level.

⁷⁶ For discussion of Second Millennium severed heads, cf. Dolce 2004.

⁷⁷ Cf. Puchstein 1912, 67-72, emphasizes the gesture and the attributes of the figure, which seem to be related to a ritual rather than to war actions. Cf. also van den Hout 1993.



a. Ugarit Stele



b. Zincirli Orthostat A/6



c. Zincirli Plaque S0102



d. Maras (B/8)

Fig. 6: Gesture of two figures facing each other.

marching in a row (H/12). At Zincirli the rider with severed head from the town gate (A/3), the one found reemployed (K/4) and the third rider (B/27) from the citadel gate point to the same symbolism of military strength and enemy defeat, and show together with the citadel gate slab with the scene of a chariot overriding a dead enemy (B/1) a process of formation of two different iconographies: the active war scene (chariots overwhelming enemies)⁷⁸ and the military parade (series of foot soldiers, more rarely riders⁷⁹, carrying

⁷⁸ It is interesting that also among the unfinished slabs at the Early Iron Age Yesemek quarry one slab represents a chariot war scene.

⁷⁹ Riders are generally not employed in active war scenes.

in some cases severed heads). At Zincirli the rider combined with a severed head probably should be viewed in this development of the iconographic discourse, which then became standard in more recent periods.

These themes will then become from the 10th to the 8th century BC very well represented in gates with chariots overwhelming enemies (Karkemish Long Wall of Sculpture, c/5-9; Tayinat 2.), soldiers marching with or without defeated enemies (Til Barsip A/3,5-6, Karkemish C/10-14, Tell Halaf A3/15-17, Tayinat gate VII orthostats⁸⁰), and share with the hunt scenes the fact that the warriors as well as the chariot drivers do not bear any specific features to distinguish them socially, rather, as in the hunt scenes, it is the act 'of defeating the enemy' the main character of the scene. Therefore the paternity of the action was ascribed probably to the town or to those inhabiting the town, referring to a more basic 'us and them' distinction.

New themes: the dynastic strength

As explained above, the identification of the scene with two standing men (A/6) with the concept of dynastic stability is related to the connections between this specific scene in the town gate and the larger banquet and dynastic scene in the citadel gate. In the attempt to trace back this kind of iconography we can find a few examples (Fig. 6) from the second millennium and a few from the first, which may be used to better understand the formative process of this theme.

Teissier (Keel-Leu and Teissier 2004, 276)⁸¹ suggests that when the ruler is represented in pairs on second millennium seals, he may represent different aspects of the same person or members of the royal family. This interpretation seems to support the above-mentioned interpretation of the figures and could be the iconographic idea behind our representation.

The Late Bronze Age stele from Ugarit (Schaeffer 1936, Pl. XIV, Yon 1991, 335) seems to best represent the general setting of our scene: two standing men with long dresses perform an identical gesture. However in contrast to the Zincirli slab, several details are different: they have a table between them, one of the figures wears a hat and the gesture is completely different. Here the hands performing the gesture are represented in the same way (in profile U-shaped), they are empty and they are not raised to the

⁸⁰ Harrison 2005, Fig. 1.

⁸¹ When dealing with seals with rulers' representations on Syrian glyptic, she states (273) that "the ruler is represented singly or in pairs. When in pairs the ruler can be identical or varied. It is unknown whether the representation of pairs of rulers indicates different aspects of the same ruler (when dressed differently), or, when identical, refers to a concept such as parity or dynastic stability, or to a specific royal ritual. It is probably significant that such rulers, even different ones, are always represented in neutral and not aggressive stances. A secondary figure (...) may represent a figure such as the crown prince".

mouths rather are about to interact⁸² with each other touching their middle fingers. Most scholars seem to interpret this scene as the representation of an oath to close a treaty, a pact between two rulers of equal status.⁸³ In this interpretation the lotus flower above the heads of the figures would not imply any funerary elements, but rather be considered as a decorative element. Schaeffer (1936, 118-119) and many other scholars after him proposed two different interpretations, i.e. the oath for an alliance (which is the most common interpretation) or a funerary scene (limited to Schaeffer and Perrot). In the case of the funerary scene, the two figures are comparable to the two on the lid of the Ahiram sarcophagus: here both the object (a sarcophagus) and the inscription state that the two standing men are father and son, and that the representation implies a dynastic succession connected to the death of one of the persons. The two figures in the Ahiram sarcophagus perform different gestures, one seated holding a drooping lotus flower and the other standing, possibly representing the deceased and the live person respectively.⁸⁴

In addition to these two possible comparisons, which are related to a temple (the Ugarit stele) or to a grave (the Ahiram sarcophagus), there is a small silver plaque with gold sheet from Zincirli (S3691 published in Andrae 1943: Taf. 46,k and 47,e) representing two standing figures with a staff, holding in their hands a lotus flower, facing each other and performing exactly the same gesture as in the Ugarit stela without the table between them. The small plaque was found in the burnt deposit behind the column of room K2⁸⁵ and was definitely in use until the 8th century BC: the two figures wear different garments, but as in the case of the orthostat from the town gate they hold a staff and stand in front of each other while they perform apparently the same gesture, but different from that of the town gate orthostat. This plaque mixes together elements of the town gate orthostats with those of the Ugarit stele. A fourth element which may connect the two gestures of drinking and touching the other person is a small fragment from Maraş (B/8), where one standing figure ‘puts’ his hand on the cup of the figure in front of him in what seems to be a variation of the banquet scene. This fragment seems to merge the drinking/eating and the touching gesture, so that the spheres of meaning may converge.

Thus, although no definite conclusion can be reached, it seems possible to suggest that the gesture of interacting in these scenes, either by touching each other or by drinking,

⁸² Mayer (Mayer 1992: 271) identifies the gesture performed in this Ugarit slab with the gesture of breaking the bread, a formula employed in Emar and Ekalte in occasion of real estate sale documents: in this case the table seems to suggest a food consumption (although Schaeffer 1936 identified the rectangular objects on the table with tablets), while the hands are empty.

⁸³ Mayer 1992, Stol 2002, and Amiet 1996 interpret this scene as the representation of an alliance/pact. Amiet 1996 in particular suggest that the scene is already present in MBA and LBI seals and represents two kings/rulers/representatives of ethnic groups.

⁸⁴ Porada 1973 dates it to the beginning of the 10th century BC, while Sader 1998 and Rehm 2004 ascribe it to the 13th century BC; currently the sarcophagus seems to be dated to the 13th and the inscription to the 10th century BC (Hakimian 2008: 49) for the first identification of the two men cf. Chehab 1971.

⁸⁵ For the function and use of these rooms and buildings cf. Pucci 2008a.

may indicate a mutual recognition, in the sense of a ‘pact’ or basic recognition of equal status.⁸⁶ When the figures, banqueting or touching, hold also symbols of power and are located in public structures, they may refer to broader concepts of dynastic stability and peace. These examples may be interpreted as different steps in the formative process of a ‘new’ iconographic theme that mirrors the ‘new’ need to represent local authorities and promote self-identification with the town and with the ruling local dynasty. The carved reliefs at the Royal Buttress in Karkemish and also in the Bar Rakib orthostat at Zincirli can be understood as the development of this specific theme.⁸⁷

4c. Hittite narrative and Syro-Hittite vignettes: shifting the meaning of gate structures

The decorative programme of the Hittite gates at Alaça Höyük and of the Early Iron Age at Malatya (Period IV) or at Karkemish (Water Gate) all included libation scenes. These three gates are all structures which belong entirely (as Alaça) or partially (as Karkemish and Malatya) to the Hittite empire or its immediate successor⁸⁸ so that we may hypothesize that they kept a direct link to Anatolian ritual traditions. Consequently and according to the recent interpretations of the gate at Alaça, the libation scenes represent the acme of the whole representation, the moment of worship of the gods. If this interpretation seems very likely for Alaça, it is more difficult for Karkemish and Malatya, simply because the original setting of the slabs is not preserved, so that we cannot reconstruct the general narrative of the gates.

However, it is evident that at Zincirli as well as in other ‘new foundations’ the iconographic theme of the libation disappears completely and the role of the gods changes sensibly: they are not the object of libation anymore rather they belong to the general parade and ‘march’ together with fantastic animals, soldiers and rulers. Therefore, if in the program at Alaça Höyük the libation scenes were the acme of the representation, showing the three main divinities and the rituals carried out in their honour, this whole narrative programme disappears together with the libation performances.

Moreover the whole iconographic setting at Syro-Hittite gates changes: there is no longer a general narrative; rather the scenes are (quoting Gilibert 2011c) ‘vignettes’, i.e. closed scenes connected the one to the other simply by addition and not, as it was the case of Hittite narrative, by logic connections. While at Alaça Höyük the role of the town as a cultic place, vital in specific ritual performances, defined the narrative and iconographic

⁸⁶ It is interesting to note that in all examples quoted here besides the Maraş fragment, which is not sufficiently preserved, the figures hold a staff.

⁸⁷ For the Royal Buttress: Gilibert 2011c and Pucci 2008b. Gilibert 2011c, 128-130 in particular has emphasized this last period defining it “the age of court ceremony”.

⁸⁸ Cf. Hawkins 1995 and 2000 for the direct connections between the Hittite royal family and its aftermath in Karkemish and Malatya.

contents represented on the orthostats at the gate, it is the role of the gate in Zincirli (as well as in the other Syro-Hittite towns), which influences the iconography represented here: every scene seems to be ‘functional’ to the gate structure and emphasizes from different points of view one single general concept, i.e. establishing the status quo, reinforcing the identity, supporting the identification with the local dynasty, showing the established order; all elements which are essential for newborn city states to affirm their own existence and the relevance of the town wall not only as a border between town and country, but also as a border between ‘states’, between us and the others.

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