



Figure 72. Basalt male figures. Qatna, Royal Tomb, Antechamber. Late Bronze Age context; Middle Bronze Age manufacture. National Museum, Damascus MSH02G-i0738, MSH02G-i0744; MSH02G-i0729, MSH02G-i0736

THE ROYAL PALACE AT QATNA: POWER AND PRESTIGE IN THE LATE BRONZE AGE

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The seat of political power in Qatna was the Royal Palace, situated close to the center of the city (figs. 73, 77). Initially excavated by the French archaeologist Du Mesnil du Buisson in the 1920s, the site has been revisited by three missions since 1999—Syrian, Syrian-Italian, and Syrian-German.¹ The Syrian-German mission² was able to determine by stratigraphic and ceramic analyses that the palace was built in the Middle Bronze IIA period,³ the time of the great Qatna kings Ishkhi-Addu and Amud-pi-El, contemporaries of Shamshi-Adad I of Ashur and of Hammurabi of Babylon.⁴

The building and its main halls are unique in their construction. The foundation walls rest on solid bedrock, in places 4 to 5 meters below the ground, and a system of wide stone-filled trenches along the foundation walls serves as a safeguard against

humidity, thus protecting the mud-brick construction.⁵ The assembly hall (Hall C), measuring 36 meters square, was equipped with four huge wood columns that rested on basalt bases and supported the wood roof.⁶ Another extraordinary feature was the well, a shaft 9 by 9 meters square. Dug vertically about 20 meters below the palace, it was accessible by a basalt staircase leading all the way down to the bottom.⁷

The architectural construction of the palace projected a vision of monumentality and durability, symbolic of its power and enhanced by other features. For example, the palace was situated on top of a natural cliff, nearly 15 meters above the Lower City, creating an impressive, soaring view. The cliff itself was artificially cut into a straight, nearly vertical bloc encased in a terrace wall of mud brick.

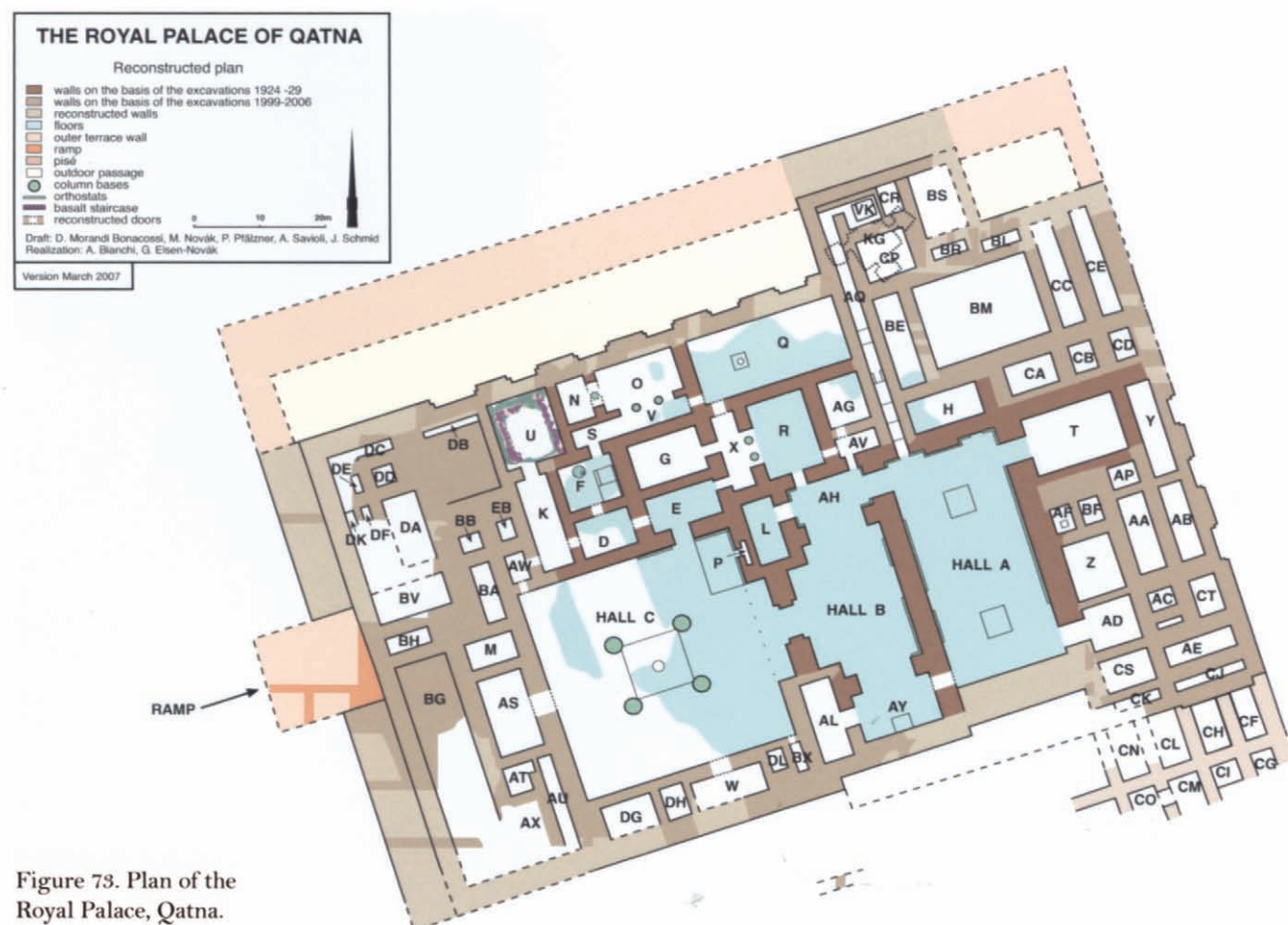


Figure 73. Plan of the Royal Palace, Qatna.

In the final destruction of the palace, probably about 1340 B.C., during the Hittite invasion of Syria, debris from the surrounding rooms collected in the well, with the fortuitous result that thousands of wall painting fragments survived (see cat. no. 69).⁸ Reconstructed, they exhibit a conspicuously Aegean style, a reflection of the desire, on the part of the ruling elite, to create prestige through the appropriation of foreign techniques and styles.⁹ This synthetic approach was in vogue from the turn of the Middle Bronze to the Late Bronze Age, when we see the apogee of the international style. The style emerged as a result of the intensive exchange of goods and ideas between the cultures of the Syro-Mesopotamia region, the Levant, Egypt, and the eastern Mediterranean.¹⁰ The Qatna wall paintings exemplify the spirit of this age.

The wood finds in the shaft of the palace well are also revealing.¹¹ When the palace was demolished the beams of the wood ceiling collapsed into the shaft. Because of the wet soil in which the remains were embedded, the organic debris is exceptionally well preserved. The abundance of cedar used in the construction of the palace can be explained by Qatna's direct control over the Anti-Lebanon Mountains and the Syrian coastal mountains, the natural habitat of cedar forests. It may also be assumed, on the basis of Qatna's geographic location and regional authority, that the kingdom exported cedar in large quantities and that wood was an important international currency. The ostentatious presence in the palace of huge cedar beams was another means of creating an image of power.

Life within the palace is described in some of the seventy-three cuneiform tablets that fell from a scribal office into the corridor of the Royal Tomb.¹² We learn, for example, that members of the royal household owned many pieces of luxury furniture and precious objects of gold and lapis lazuli,¹³ a surprising

fact given that the tablets date to the final phase of Qatna's history, the fourteenth century B.C., when the heyday of the kingdom was long past. The language of the texts, a mixture of Akkadian and Hurrian,¹⁴ is a clear indication that during the Late Bronze Age a heterogeneous population with multicultural practices lived in the city.

THE PASSAGE TO THE ANCESTORS

The most sensational discovery, in 2002, of the Syrian-German excavations at Qatna was that of the Royal Tomb, or hypogeum, below the palace.¹⁵ Because it had not been looted during the destruction of the palace or thereafter, it offers a wealth of evidence of material culture, beliefs, and rituals. When the palace was destroyed, access to the burial chambers was covered in masses of debris that prevented entrance to the tomb and protected the objects within.

A 40-meter-long subterranean corridor led from the ceremonial hall (Room A) to the tomb. Several doors along the corridor established divisions between the palace—the upper world—and the tomb—part of the Underworld. The corridor led 7.5 meters below the palace floors to a room-sized shaft 4.5 meters deep, which functioned as the antechamber to the tomb.

In the antechamber were two exceptionally well preserved statues of basalt, slightly less than life-size (fig. 72).¹⁶ Virtually identical, they represent two figures seated on low stools. Their garment, a long Syrian bordered robe, and headdress, a broad ring holding the hair, identify the figures as royal. The headdress is strikingly reminiscent of that on the so-called head of Yarim-Lim from Alalakh (fig. 64), which shows in more detail what is only schematically depicted on the Qatna statues.¹⁷ The stylistic rendering of the face, in particular the short slightly protruding beard, also closely relates the Qatna statues to the



Figure 74. Basalt male figures in situ before the Royal Tomb, Qatna.



Figure 75. Inside the central chamber of the Royal Tomb, Qatna.

head from Alalakh. All three date to Middle Bronze Age II and exemplify the finest of Old Syrian statuary.

The two statues, positioned at either side of the entrance to the inner chambers (fig. 74), served as guardians to the Underworld. They also received offerings, indicated by the open vessel that each figure holds in the right hand. Deposited before them were several bowls and animal bones, remains of the last offerings. As royal figures in a royal tomb were surely ancestor statues, the antechamber was likely an important site of ancestor worship.¹⁸

RITUALS AND THE DISPLAY OF PRESTIGE

Cut into the natural bedrock 12 meters below the palace were the four inner chambers in the Royal Tomb, a large central chamber surrounded by three side chambers. While the central chamber served a variety of functions, from primary and secondary burial to the display of prestigious objects and collective meals, the side chambers were reserved for specific activities. The western chamber was used for burial rites. The eastern chamber was the ossuary of the hypogeum, where the bones were eventually deposited after a series of ritual ceremonies. The southern chamber has been interpreted as a symbolic throne or banquet room for deceased rulers and their spirits.¹⁹ This chamber was particularly well furnished with luxury items such as calcite vessels, the carnelian vessel (cat. no. 132), and the gold duck heads (cat. no. 129).

The central chamber (fig. 75) held a basalt sarcophagus, in which the bones of several individuals were found together with pottery, gold pendants, and an ivory scepter, indicating that the tomb was a burial site for the royal family. The tomb held a minimum of nineteen to twenty-three individuals of various ages, both male and female.²⁰ (Other burials may have disintegrated, as the bones were poorly preserved in the chambers not filled with earth.)

Four wood biers—reconstructed from decayed remains—were placed on the floor of the main chamber, with scattered bones and an abundance of grave goods deposited on top, among them hundreds of beads, decorative plaques (cat. nos. 134, 135), quiver fittings (cat. no. 133), a lion-headed vessel (fig. 83), and

a modeled hand of gold (cat. no. 131). The objects show stylistic and iconographic influences from many neighboring cultures, ranging geographically from Egypt to Mesopotamia.

In the Syro-Levantine region during the second millennium B.C., these foreign influences were combined in a hybrid international style (see pp. 387–94).²¹ Within this broad category several features can be distinguished as distinctly Syrian in character. Indeed, a specifically Late Bronze Age Qatna style can be identified. Had more objects survived from other Syrian centers, it would, in principle, be possible to identify other local styles. The material value of the objects recovered from the Qatna palace and Royal Tomb, their distant provenances, and their foreign iconography were for the ruling elite expressions of prestige, for through these objects it was possible to demonstrate the kingdom's far-reaching contacts and its participation in interregional exchange networks.²² Prestige was also acquired from artifacts from foreign regions (exemplified here by Egyptian stone vessels, cat. no. 141), imported to Qatna either as objects of exchange or as diplomatic gifts.²³

Many of the objects and materials in the grave chambers undoubtedly served ritual purposes. A large number of pottery vessels were used for the storage of food, and beneath benches in the main chamber were found animal bones that had been tossed as leftovers from meals. What this suggests is that communal consumption of food—in which the living and the dead participated, at least symbolically—took place within the central chamber.²⁴ The *kispu* ritual, the continuous supply of the deceased with food, is known from ancient Near Eastern texts as a major concern of the cult of the dead.²⁵ At Qatna, we have for the first time been given the opportunity to acknowledge this practice archaeologically, to observe its significance both for the living and as a guarantee for the political stability of the kingdom.

1. Al-Maqdissi et al. 2002.

2. Co-directed by Michel al-Maqdissi and the author.

3. According to the Babylonian Middle Chronology, ca. 1850–1750 B.C.; according to the Babylonian Low Chronology, 1800–1700 B.C.

4. Dohmann-Pfälzner and Pfälzner 2006, pp. 131–80; Pfälzner 2007a; Dohmann-Pfälzner and Pfälzner 2008.

5. Novák 2006.

6. Pfälzner 2007a.

7. Dohmann-Pfälzner and Pfälzner 2006 and 2008.

8. The wall paintings were studied by Constance von Rüden (2006).

9. On this, see Feldman 2007.

10. Caubet 1998c.

11. Dohmann-Pfälzner and Pfälzner 2008.

12. Richter 2003; Richter 2005.

13. Thomas Richter, personal communication.

14. Richter 2003, pp. 171–77.

15. Al-Maqdissi et al. 2003; Pfälzner 2006.

16. Novák and Pfälzner 2003, pp. 156ff., figs. 17–20.

17. Woolley 1955, p. 235ff.

18. Pfälzner 2005.

19. See Al-Maqdissi et al. 2003, pp. 204–10.

20. Personal communication, Carsten Witzel, Syrian-German Mission, October 2007.

21. Caubet 1998c.

22. The author wishes to thank Elisa Roßberger for sharing her insights on the prestige function of Qatna jewelry. See Roßberger 2006.

23. See Pfälzner 2007b.

24. Pfälzner 2007c.

25. Tsukimoto 1985.



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DUCK HEADS

Gold

Height 3.4 cm (1⅜ in.); width 7.2 cm (2⅞ in.);
diameter 1.3 cm (½ in.)

Qatna, Royal Tomb

Late Bronze Age, 15th–14th century B.C.

National Museum, Damascus, Syria

MSH02G-i2038

This object with two golden duck heads, discovered in the Royal Tomb of Qatna, is a masterpiece of Late Bronze Age art in Syria. It is made entirely of gold, including the fastening pegs. The two heads, with their elegantly curved necks, are mounted on a gold baton and face in opposite directions. They are rendered in a perfectly naturalistic style. The fine overlapping feathers are indicated by miniature incisions, and the beaks are subtly curved and characterized by anatomical details such as jagged edges along the upper and lower edges, with openings for the nostrils at the base of the upper beak. The tongues, which were fashioned separately, are visible through the half-open bills; the eyes were once inlaid. A pole down the middle bears a golden head of the Egyptian goddess Hathor, with a typically triangular face, a long headdress with bands, and cow's ears that are purely Egyptian in iconography.

The sophisticated production technique demonstrates the advanced level of crafts-

manship of second-millennium B.C. goldsmiths.¹ The artifact is composed of fifteen individual pieces, all of which are soldered to one another. The two heads were produced using the lost-wax method, with the lower beak, tongue, eye rings, base, and fastening pegs attached by soldering; the incised decoration was added with a punch as the last step of manufacture. The workshop where this masterpiece was produced must therefore have been organized by a division of labor involving various specialists. Although the Hathor head suggests Egyptian influence, we can assume, based on the style of the heads, that the workshop was in Syria. The object must have been made in the early phase of the Late Bronze Age, around the fifteenth or fourteenth century B.C.

It is difficult to ascertain how this object was used. The two fastening devices at the lower end of the necks clearly demonstrate that the heads were once attached to another object, probably of organic material, of which nothing survived in the tomb chambers. We can only speculate that these were two pieces of wood, into which the fastening pegs could have been inserted by screwing (on one side) and by plugging (on the other). In the Syro-Levantine region, sculpted duck heads, mainly of ivory, were generally connected to small shallow bowls, also of ivory (see cat. nos. 199–202).

Such vessels have been found at many sites, from Lachish in the south to Alalakh in the north (fig. 106) and Tell Brak in the

east.² They are commonly thought to have served as containers for oils, perfumes, and cosmetics. They are also known from Egypt, mainly in wood, but in smaller quantities (cat. no. 200).³ Duck-headed vessels were prestigious and cultic objects,⁴ widespread and internationally distributed over the Levant and Egypt, including the eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean area.⁵ Two also traveled on the Uluburun ship (see cat. no. 199). Their main center of production must have been in western Syria and the Levantine coast.

If the Qatna duck heads were, most plausibly, part of a cosmetic container, it could be reconstructed as a double vessel with one wood bowl attached to each of the two heads. The heads would in this way have functioned as a handle. This interpretation is supported by the observation, made by Edilberto Formigli, that there are traces of abrasion concentrated beside the eyes and on the Hathor head. The object is the only known example of this type.⁶ The innovative character of the Qatna vessel together with the fact that it is made of pure gold signifies its unique and extraordinary importance.

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1. This technique was studied by Edilberto Formigli, Murlo, Italy, and Marta Abbado, Florence.

2. Findspots are Lachish, Megiddo, Tell Dan, Sidon, Kamid el-Loz, Tell Qasile, Ugarit, Alalakh, Tell Meskene, Tell Brak (summarized by Echt 1983 and *Das Schiff von Uluburun* 2005, p. 605).

3. *Schönheit im Alten Ägypten* 2006, p. 227, no. 196; Schoske in *Schönheit, Abglanz der Göttlichkeit* 1990, p. 94, no. 52; W. Peck and R. Freed in *Egypt's Golden Age* 1982, pp. 213–14, nos. 258, 260; Hermann 1932.
4. A cultic function, at least in New Kingdom Egypt, is evident from the depictions of two duck-headed vessels on a mural painting in the grave of Kenamun at Thebes (Dynasty 18) where they function as offerings to the king in the New Year's ritual: see Davies 1930, vol. 1, pls. 18, 20; vol. 2, pl. 22A (see fig. 107, this volume).
5. For a duck-headed vessel from Mycenae, see Sakellarakis 1971; see also S. Marinatos and Hirmer 1973, fig. 235.
6. A slightly different type is represented by an Egyptian object of wood composed of a bowl on one side and a duck's entire body on the other, with both sides functioning as interconnected containers. However, it features only a single duck head, which could be used as a handle (Hermann 1932, p. 93, pl. VIIIc). A pottery vessel with two duck heads, arranged not in opposition but parallel to each other, was found at Hattusa and dates to the fourteenth century B.C. (see Bittel 1976b, p. 157, fig. 165).



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INLAID ROSETTE

Gold, lapis lazuli, carnelian

Diameter 6.9 cm (2¾ in.)

Qatna, Royal Tomb

Late Bronze Age, 15th–14th century B.C.

National Museum, Damascus, Syria

MSH02G-i1150

This extraordinary gold rosette is the most complex piece of jewelry found in the central chamber of the Royal Tomb.¹ The center of the solid gold disc is covered by a carnelian roundel bordered by a broad ring of carnelian set in gold. Twenty-six petals, each subdivided into nine compartments inlaid with lapis lazuli and carnelian, are arranged around the central roundel by a flaring ring of gold wire. The inlay at the end of each petal is alternately lapis or carnelian, so that two neighboring petals always show a different sequence of blue and red stones, creating a vivid and colorful effect. The stone inlays are glued to the gold compartments with an adhesive of which a red crumbly substance remains partly visible.

The technique of gold jewelry inlaid with lapis lazuli, carnelian, and other semiprecious stones in contrasting arrangement of colors was developed to perfection in Egypt.² It was imported already to the

Levant during the Middle Bronze Age, as is seen in the locally produced gold-inlay jewelry from Byblos that incorporates carnelian combined with blue and green semiprecious stones (see cat. no. 29).³ It must therefore be assumed that the inlay technique was common in Late Bronze Age Syria. The absence of Egyptian symbols in the Qatna rosette is another clear indication of non-Egyptian manufacture. Most likely, it is a product of Syrian craftsmanship.

On the reverse are thirteen small gold loops soldered on to each second petal of the rosette and perhaps used for sewing the heavy ornament on to a textile or piece of leather. The rosette probably served to adorn a fine garment as a kind of brooch. Or perhaps it was attached to a leather ribbon to circle the arm. The latter reconstruction is supported by the slight convex curve along the middle axis, which could have enabled adjustment to the shape of the arm. If the latter interpretation is correct, the rosette would be a typological predecessor of the rosette wrist straps worn by the Assyrian kings and winged Genii in Neo-Assyrian art.⁴ Given the numerous smaller gold rosettes found in the Royal Tomb, most of which were probably sewn onto garments, it can be argued

that already in Late Bronze Age Syria the rosette served as a royal symbol. PP

1. First published in Al-Maqdissi et al. 2003, p. 215, fig. 15.
2. See Lange and Hirmer 1967, pl. XIV, and T. James 2000, pp. 200–241.
3. Parrot, Chéhab, and Moscati 1977, p. 42, figs. 28, 29.
4. Hrouda 1991, figs. on pp. 124, 125, 126, 127, 131, 326, 347, 355, 356; for Genii see figs. on pp. 126, 127, 232, 233.

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HAND FRAGMENT

Gold

Width 4.2 cm (1⅝ in.); length 6.4 cm (2½ in.)

Qatna, Royal Tomb

Late Bronze Age, 15th–14th century B.C.

National Museum, Damascus, Syria

MSH02G-i0758

This fragment of a right hand was found in connection with a bier and a multitude of other grave goods in the central chamber of the Royal Tomb. The hand is about 6.4 centimeters long and about half natural size. Hollow inside, it consists of gold sheet in the shape of four fingers. The fingers are separated from each other by shallow flutes, and the details of the



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fingers were traced on the surface during the final stage of production. The fingernails, cuticles, and skin folds at the knuckles are rendered in an astonishingly naturalistic fashion, and the lengths of the fingers are anatomically correct. There is a sharp edge on the gold sheet where the thumb may have broken off. It must originally have been set apart from the other fingers, probably below the palm. Thus the hand could possibly have held other objects.

The hand was probably part of a libation arm. Mounted on a wood stick inserted into the hollow end of the hand, the arm would have been held, allowing the offerings within to be presented without being directly touched by humans. Similar arms functioned as incense holders in Egypt.¹ Stone, faience, and clay examples known in Syro-Mesopotamia and Anatolia have also been interpreted as libation arms. While those that have survived are mainly dated to the Iron Age,² they are also known in the Middle and Late Bronze Ages,³ with examples at Alalakh, Ugarit, and Boğazköy.⁴

The hand from Qatna is unique in being the only excavated example of its kind to be made of gold and must have had special prestige in the royal burial. Whether it was actually used as a libation arm within the grave chambers is difficult to say. Water libations (*naq ma*) in connection with food offerings (*kispu*) are well recorded in ancient Near Eastern texts as part of the rituals⁵ performed to care for the spirits of the dead (*etemmu*). Ample evidence of food offerings in the Royal Tomb would tend to support the offering of liquid libations as well.

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1. See, for example, Schoske in *Schönheit, Abglanz der Göttlichkeit* 1990, p. 66, no. 16, and *Schönheit im Alten Ägypten* 2006, p. 258, no. 282. For images on Egyptian wall paintings and reliefs, see Lange and Hirmer 1967, fig. 226, or *Schönheit im Alten Ägypten* 2006, p. 258, no. 284.
2. Kepinski 1987–90, pp. 12–14.
3. Kepinski 1977.
4. Alalakh: Woolley 1955, p. 297 (Yarim-Lim Palace, Level VII, Room 18). Ugarit: Calvet in *Le royaume d'Ougarit* 2004, p. 41, no. 22. Nimrud: Moortgat 1967, p. 115, fig. 237. Boğazköy: Bittel 1957a, pp. 33–42, tables I–III; Fischer 1963, pp. 149–51, pls. 122, 124.
5. Bayliss 1973, pp. 116ff.; Tsukimoto 1985, p. 239.

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BOTTLE

Carnelian

Height 12.4 cm (4⁷/₈ in.)

Qatna, Royal Tomb

Late Bronze Age, 15th–14th century B.C.

National Museum, Damascus, Syria

MSH02G-i0812

This miniature bottle is made from a single piece of carnelian of orange-red color with cloudy whitish patches. It was carefully carved to form a perfectly tear-drop-shaped body with a narrow neck, and the surface was then polished to a shiny, eye-catching gloss.

The vessel is one of the largest extant pieces of carnelian worked into an object ever found in the ancient Near East. Natural occurrences of the stone are found

mainly in the region of the Persian Gulf and in India, and also, but to a much lesser extent, in the deserts of Egypt.¹ An eastern provenance is more likely. The difficulty of procuring the stone from such a long distance surely added to the object's prestige.

There are no parallels for this kind of carnelian bottle in Egypt, in the Levant, or in Syro-Mesopotamia. Nevertheless, it can be argued that the vessel was likely produced in Syria, adapting to stone a shape that closely resembles clay vessels made in the region from the Early to the Late Bronze Ages.² While it is difficult to date this object, theoretically it could have been made long before it was placed in the Royal Tomb.

The function of the bottle within the tomb can be seen in connection with the many other small stone vessels found nearby, in the southern chamber. These most likely contained precious oils, perfumes, and ointments. Undoubtedly, the contents of the little carnelian bottle, whatever it may have been, were enhanced by the rare and beautiful material in which it was contained.

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1. Mineralogical determination and geological information kindly provided by Judit Zöld-földi, University of Tübingen.
2. For Early Bronze Age examples, see, for example, Fugmann 1958, fig. 98 (no. 3A647 [Niveau J2]); Mazzoni 2002, pl. XLV:135 (Zalaquiyate, Early Bronze IVB). For Late Bronze Age examples, see *ibid.*, pl. LVIII:17 (Tell Afis, Level E 13).

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QUIVER PLAQUE WITH HUNTING SCENE

Gold, silver

Height 9 cm (3½ in.); width 17.9 cm (7 in.)

Qatna, Royal Tomb

Late Bronze Age, 15th–14th century B.C.

National Museum, Damascus, Syria

MSH02G-i1588

This plaque was found in the central chamber of the Royal Tomb in close proximity to a larger decorative plaque fashioned for a quiver (fig. 76). As both are similar in style and made in the same, unusual technique of gold foil-on-silver sheet appliqué, it is highly probable that the two pieces were produced in the same workshop. Whether the present, smaller plaque was also decoration for a quiver—even the same one—or was decoration for a sheath accompanying the quiver remains unknown. The perforations along the border of the plaque indicate that it was sewn onto a textile or a piece of leather.

The figurative scene fills one register without subdivisions. Around the field is a decorative border, with the same hatched pattern as on the edge of the larger quiver



Figure 76. Gold and silver relief plaque for a quiver, detail. Qatna, Royal Tomb, central chamber. Late Bronze Age. National Museum, Damascus MSH02G-i1091

plaque, further attesting to a common place of production. The scene is depicted twice in exact symmetrical arrangement. The middle axis is formed by a stylized palm tree with leaves and dates. The figural representation shows two men, identical in appearance, both wearing a kilt with decorative bands and a fitted upper garment, killing a stag. The modeled rendering of the stag's head, the fine parallel incisions indicating the hide, and the irregularly branching antler are characteristic of the art of Qatna. The closed composition is created by the stag, which turns its head, the two figures who look toward each other, and the flying bird, apparently inserted to fill the void above the stag.

Scenes of animals in combat and the domination by men over wild beasts are deeply rooted in Mesopotamian iconography, dating back to the Early Dynastic and Akkadian periods of the third millennium B.C. The same motifs are still widespread in Late Bronze Age Syro-Mesopotamia, particularly in Mitanni-style glyptic. The compositional style is, however, specific to Qatna. It is characterized by a symmetrical, closed composition, the absence of overlapping, and static figural postures. Facial features typically include a large nose and ears, staring eyes, and a small mouth. The straight hair is marked by deeply incised parallel grooves. Fine parallel lines are used to indicate the hide of wild animals, conferring a note of elegance.

The stag hunt depicted on this plaque is a rare subject in Late Bronze Age art. On Syrian objects the stag is usually protected by man against the attack of wild animals such as lions, as on the gold bowl from Ugarit (cat. no. 146). By contrast, on contemporary Hittite figurative reliefs stags are hunted by men, as on a bowl from Kastamonu,¹ on the orthostats from Alaca Höyük,² and on relief vessels.³ While a preference for stag hunts seems to be a common feature of Hittite art and of works from Qatna, the stylistic renderings follow very different principles. The Hittite scenes, though vivid and freely arranged, are executed in a rather flat style; the Qatna scenes are characterized by a static arrangement but are rendered in a plastic, more detailed manner. Furthermore, the stags in the Hittite representations are hunted with bow and arrow, while on the Qatna

plaques the stags are captured by hand weapons. In Hittite Anatolia, the stag hunt belongs to a religious context (see cat. no. 107).⁴ At Qatna, by contrast, the subject seems to symbolize man's domination over the wild and thus was used as an emblem of prestige by the Late Bronze Age political elite.

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1. Emre 2002, pp. 232–33, fig. 18.
2. Bittel 1976b, figs. 224, 225.
3. Ibid., p. 146, no. 146.
4. Emre 2002, pp. 220, 233; V. Haas 1994, p. 432.



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PLAQUE WITH THE GOD HORUS

Gold

Height 5.6 cm (2¼ in.); width 4.4 cm (1¾ in.)

Qatna, Royal Tomb

Late Bronze Age, 15th–14th century B.C.

National Museum, Damascus, Syria

MSH02G–i1087

A mong the finds in the Royal Tomb were a number of thin gold plaques with elaborate figurative representations in relief that reflect iconographic connections to different cultural regions. The plant and two gods on this U-shaped plaque are unambiguously Egyptian in influence, for they represent *sema tawwi*, symbol of the Unification of the Two Lands, Upper and Lower Egypt. The god Horus, depicted twice, is shown binding

a lotus plant around a pole, signifying the act of unification. Horus is distinguished by his falcon head and wears the Egyptian double crown of Upper and Lower Egypt. Atop the pole is a bird with spread wings above a basket-shaped support. The bird's head is crowned by the winding head of a cobra. In a separate, lower register is another bird, also with spread wings.

While the Egyptian iconography appears authentic, closer examination reveals noticeable aberrations. An archetypal Egyptian representation would depict, opposite the falcon-headed Horus, the god Seth with his long curved muzzle.¹ Here, for the sake of symmetry, one of the main stylistic norms of Late Bronze Age art in Syria, Seth is omitted and replaced by a second Horus. Another modification is the replacement, on the central pole, of a cartouche with an inscription with the winged bird, since an Egyptian text would probably not have been understood in Syria. The basket-shaped object on the pole below the bird may be understood as a remnant of the lower half of the cartouche border.

The plaque thus demonstrates the adaptation by Syrian artisans of foreign iconographic models to local cultural principles. The meaning of motifs necessarily changed with modifications. In the case of the Horus plaque, while the symbolism of the Unification of the Two Lands would have been meaningless to Syrian elites, the exotic motif likely served as an emblem of prestige.

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1. For a standard Egyptian model, see Lange and Hirmer 1967, fig. 88.

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PLAQUE WITH FIGURES FLANKING HATHOR STANDARD

Gold

Height 3.9 cm (1½ in.); width 4.6 cm (1¾ in.)

Qatna, Royal Tomb

Late Bronze Age, 15th–14th century B.C.

National Museum, Damascus, Syria

MSH02G–i1930

This gold plaque from the central chamber of the Royal Tomb is rectangular in shape, with a line of perforations along the upper and the lower edge. The plaque is broken on the left and right sides, but undoubtedly perforations were provided there as well, as the holes surely served as a means of sewing the plaque on to a textile or piece of leather. Because it was found on a burial bier, the plaque may have been attached to a shroud or a garment of the deceased. Or perhaps it was used as a piece of jewelry, affixed to a strip of hard leather that was worn as a belt, a pectoral, a necklace, or a headband. Its small size and singularity make the latter options more plausible.

The repoussé decoration on thin gold sheet of two figures at either side of a standard is rendered to create the effect of deep relief. The standard is surmounted by the head of the Egyptian goddess Hathor, depicted with typical Egyptian iconography: a rhomboid face, protruding cow ears, and long strands of hair held together by bands.¹ The two figures, wearing the Egyptian short kilt with a triangular projection in front of the body are



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also represented in Egyptian imagery.² Attached to the kilt at the back is the artificial tail of a bull, derived from an Egyptian royal emblem. Even the figures' headdresses resemble the Egyptian *afnet*.³ The two figures, nude above the waist, are nearly identical except for their jewelry. The figure on the left is adorned with a pectoral; the figure on the right wears a simple torque around the neck. Each holds a long scepter in one hand, similar to the Egyptian *heqa*-scepter or the longer *awt*-staff. The scepters held by these figures were probably incorporated into Syrian iconography as a fusion of the two.

The subject as it is depicted here does not appear in Egyptian art. Conforming as it does to the principle of symmetry characteristic for Syrian art in the Late Bronze Age, the plaque would seem to be the work of a Syrian goldsmith. The somewhat clumsy rendering of the faces, typical of Syrian craftsmanship, especially at Qatna, would further support such a provenance. PP

1. The head of Hathor mounted on a pole is also seen in connection with Egyptian objects such as spoons (e.g.: *Schönheit, Abglanz der Göttlichkeit* 1990, p. 79, no. 33), mirrors (ibid., p. 120, no. 102), sistra (ibid., p. 142, no. 127), or capitals of columns (see Lange and Hirmer 1967, fig. 268).
2. This feature is strongly reminiscent of the two guardian statues at the entrance of the Tomb of Tutankhamun; see T. James 2000, pp. 60–61.
3. Seen, for example, on the left guardian statue of the Tomb of Tutankhamun (ibid.).

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LOTUS PENDANT

Gold, lapis lazuli (?)
Height 2 cm (¾ in.); width 2.6 cm (1 in.)
Qatna, Royal Palace
Middle to Late Bronze Age, 17th–
14th century B.C.
Homs Museum, Homs, Syria MSH02G-i0391



This small gold pendant, found in Room AL of the Royal Palace to the west of the throne room (Hall B), is composed of a number of single elements soldered together. Two gold rings and two papyrus-shaped parts are attached to a round central element. Both papyri and the central element are inlaid with a dark stone, probably weathered lapis lazuli. Within the two gold rings and attached to each side of the central element are two oval double compartments, in which stone inlays must once have been inserted.

The form of the pendant is symmetrical, closed, and flowerlike. It was possibly part of a necklace or a single pendant. There is no loop attached to the reverse, but one or both of the rings could have been used to suspend the object from a string or an earring, or for sewing it to a textile. The papyrus may be regarded as an Egyptianizing element in jewelry made in Syria, where the technique of stone inlay—originally imported from Egypt—had been common since the Middle Bronze Age.¹ PP

1. This is demonstrated, for example, by the Egyptianizing but locally produced jewelry from the Middle Bronze royal tombs at Byblos (see Parrot, Chéhab, and Moscati 1977, p. 42, figs. 28, 29). See catalogue no. 29 in this volume.

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SCARAB WITH ROBED FIGURE

Amethyst, gold
Length 2.4 cm (1 in.)
Qatna, Royal Tomb
Late Bronze Age context, 15th–
14th century B.C.
Old Syrian manufacture, 18th–
17th century B.C.
National Museum, Damascus, Syria
MSH02G-i0764



The beautiful amethyst scarab was found in the central chamber of the Royal Tomb.¹ On the back of the scarab the details of the beetle are only faintly indicated. The line between the *pronotum*, the shieldlike middle part of the body, and the *elytra*, the rear wings, is subtly indicated by two short engraved lines on either side of the body. The dividing line between the two wings of the *elytra* is missing, probably as a result of abrasion from use. In front of the head the long mandibles are rendered with deep grooves indicating teeth.

The base of the scarab bears the carefully modeled and deeply engraved image of a standing figure dressed in a long robe. The veil-like covering of the head and the absence of a beard identify the figure as female. The robe is fashioned from a single cloth wrapped around the body and draped over the head. Only the face—accentuated by full lips, a broad nose, and an enormous eye—is left uncovered. A drill was used extensively in the modeling of the face.

This type of dress, a robe pulled over the head, well known from Hittite art, however, is not specifically Anatolian and is frequently represented elsewhere in ancient Near Eastern art.² Representations of women with similarly covered heads occur also on Classic Syrian-style seals from the Middle Bronze Age.³ A garment strikingly similar to the one on the Qatna scarab appears on a bronze plaque in a Late Bronze Age context at Hazor; that robe, however, is worn by a male.⁴ This robe type and its specifically female rendering can thus be identified as typically Syrian. These observations leave no doubt that the scarab is of Syro-Levantine manufacture. Close stylistic parallels to the representation of a woman on a Classic Syrian-style seal allow us to date the scarab to the Middle Bronze Age.⁵

The scarab is held by a thick gold bezel, and two gold rings are attached to the openings of the central drill hole, an indication



that the scarab was originally part of a ring, most likely of gold.⁶ PP

1. Scarabs made of violet amethyst are frequent in the Levant and in Egypt during most of the second millennium B.C. as is demonstrated by finds from Byblos (*Liban: L'autre rive* 1998, p. 73; two pieces), from the Uluburun ship (cat. no. 226), and from the Tomb of Tutankhamun (T. James 2000, pp. 246–47).
2. Compare, e.g., the Hittite vases from Bitik and Inandik (Bittell 1976b, fig. 140) or Late Hittite representations of women at Carchemish or Maraş (Bittell 1976b, figs. 287, 289, 313, 315, 316).
3. Otto 2000, p. 214, figs. 104, 110, 116, 135, 147, 313, 317, 348, 355.
4. The parallel was cited by Argiro Mavromatis (University of Tübingen) during a seminar on the Qatna objects; for an illustration, see Weippert 1988, p. 215, fig. 3.25/5.
5. Otto 2000, fig. 355.
6. A similar Middle Bronze gold seal ring with an amethyst scarab was found in the royal tombs of Byblos (*Liban: L'autre rive* 1998, p. 73).

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CYLINDER SEAL AND MODERN IMPRESSION: COLUMNS OF ANIMALS AND SYMBOLS

Gray hematite

Height 2.3 cm ($\frac{7}{8}$ in.); diameter 1.5 cm ($\frac{1}{2}$ in.)

Qatna, Royal Tomb

Late Bronze Age context, 15th–14th century B.C.

Old Syrian manufacture, 18th–

17th century B.C.

National Museum, Damascus, Syria

MSH02G–i1976

This perfectly preserved cylinder seal found in the eastern side chamber of the Royal Tomb of Qatna is made of dark gray hematite. The deeply engraved symbols are arranged in twelve vertical columns, the symbols differing from column to column but generally repeating within each column. A column of five bucrania is the most distinctive. The bull's heads depicted in frontal view have a rounded

mouth, large round eyes, long ears, and short horns. The bucranium at the bottom is, notably, turned on its side to accommodate the small amount of remaining space. To the left is a column of four figures in seated position though without chairs. In the next column are four crouching animals that in their posture resemble lions but with unusually long ears. This column is adjoined by a column of six birds, each with a raised wing and long tail feathers. To the left again is a row of six human heads in profile. The following column contains ten S-shaped symbols arranged in the form of a vertical guilloche band. To the left of it is a column of five large hands. The next column includes four crouching sphinxes with a raised wing; a small animal is inserted into the remaining space at the lower end of the column. In the next column are three masklike human faces in frontal view, with protruding ears and a long curl of hair on either side. At first glance, they resemble the Egyptian goddess Hathor, but the presence of a long beard makes them recognizable as Mesopotamian heroes.¹ Here again, to fit the space, one of the heads is depicted on its side. Below the three masks is a tripartite guilloche pattern composed of three parallel strands. The next column shows mixed symbols: (from top) a standing caprid, a seated monkey, and a series of crescents, symbols of the moon god. The following column again contains mixed symbols: (from top) a double lion-headed eagle,² probably the symbol of the god Ninurta; a kneeling man; and a bird with spread wings on top of a standard placed on the back of a lion. The last column shows a standing caprid, a standing lion, and seven crescents.

Altogether we find eighteen different symbols united on this seal, seventy-three images in total, an extraordinarily large number to be assembled on such a small surface. The symbols do not seem to carry a common message; it is doubtful even

whether each motif has a specific meaning. Rather, the images would appear to be mainly decorative. Such an assemblage of images arranged in columns is a familiar compositional type in Syrian glyptic of the Middle Bronze Age, known from Ugarit, Alalakh, and other sites in the Levant.³ The vertical columns most frequently contain rows of seated animals, human and animal heads, birds, hands, and crescents.

Many of the individual motifs can be attributed to the Old Syrian style of the Middle Bronze Age,⁴ and thus the Qatna seal can be dated from the eighteenth to the seventeenth century B.C. PP

1. Compare: Boehmer 1965, nos. 9, 10a, 23, 31, 158, 176, 238, 279, etc.; for a similar Old Syrian head type, here connected to a full figure, see Kühne in *Das Rollsiegel in Syrien* 1980, p. 76, no. 32.
2. The same double lion-headed eagle is depicted on an Old Syrian seal in the National Museum, Damascus (Kühne in *Das Rollsiegel in Syrien* 1980, no. 31), where it is, however, described as a “double-headed eagle” (*ibid.*, p. 74) because the leonine character of the heads is not as clearly visible as on the Qatna piece. The iconographic type of the double lion-headed eagle on Syrian seals can be defined more precisely on the basis of the Qatna seal.
3. Otto 2000, pp. 113–15, 143–44, nos. 35–65, 360–68; Kühne in *Das Rollsiegel in Syrien* 1980, no. 33.
4. Otto 2000, nos. 5, 24, 31, 49, 63, 115, 153, 155, 156, 158, 159; Elsen–Novák 2002, pp. 258–59, fig. 2; Kühne in *Das Rollsiegel in Syrien* 1980, nos. 31, 33.





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CYLINDER SEAL AND MODERN IMPRESSION: LOTUS CHAIN

Frit, gold

Height 2.2 cm ($\frac{7}{8}$ in.); diameter 1 cm ($\frac{3}{8}$ in.)

Qatna, Royal Tomb

Late Bronze Age, 15th–14th century B.C.

National Museum, Damascus, Syria

MSH02G-i0757

This cylinder seal was discovered in the central chamber of the Royal Tomb of Qatna. Both ends are covered by gold caps, lending prestige to the seal, which is made of inexpensive white frit. The seal image consists of purely geometric and floral designs. In the upper and lower registers is a wide, one-strand running spiral; the center of each spiral is accentuated by a drill hole. The spirals are separated from the middle register by horizontal incised lines. Between the lines is a pattern composed of two rows of stylized lotus flowers connected by a row of lozenges along the middle axis.

Both the material and the schematic composition indicate a Late Bronze date of manufacture. The running spiral with central drill holes appears on seals of the Mitanni Common Style,¹ and the lotus-flower pattern was a favorite motif on Syrian seals of the Late Bronze Age.²

This type of seal, made from a common, easily workable material, bearing a simple decoration, and embellished with

gold caps, was surely appreciated as a grave gift in the Royal Tomb in much the same way as the older, more elaborate seals made of hard stones. PP

1. Salje 1990, nos. 93, 94, 100, 124, 131, 141, 155, 163, 196, 221, etc.
2. For an example on a seal, also with gold caps, from Ugarit, see Kohlmeyer in *Land des Baal* 1982, p. 128, no. 108. An example of a Middle Syrian cylinder seal in the Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe, with a comparable three-register division and double-lotus-flower tendril in the middle register, forms a close parallel: Rehm 1997, p. 162, s92, fig. 361.

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CYLINDER SEAL AND MODERN IMPRESSION: RUNNING SPIRALS

Frit, gold

Height 1.7 cm ($\frac{3}{4}$ in.); diameter 0.8 cm ($\frac{1}{4}$ in.)

Qatna, Royal Tomb

Late Bronze Age, 15th–14th century B.C.

National Museum, Damascus, Syria

MSH02G-i2209

The seal is very similar to catalogue no. 139 and was found close by in the central chamber of the Royal Tomb. It, too, is made of white frit and had two gold caps at both ends, one of which is now missing. The remaining cap partly overlaps the edge of the seal image, which indicates that it was a later addition. The caps were probably added when the seal

was transformed into a grave good. They are not carefully made or well soldered, further supporting the notion that the seal was not used for sealing after they were attached.

Although frit is a very soft material, the seal image is deeply and sharply engraved. There is little abrasion to the surface, a sign that the seal had not been long in use before it was deposited in the grave. Based on material and style, the seal was—like catalogue no. 139—made in the Late Bronze Age. The image is divided into three horizontal registers. The middle register is filled with a continuous row of lozenges with an interior ridge and connected by drill holes. Above and below are pairs of stars roughly corresponding in alignment to each of the lozenges.

The upper and lower registers are symmetrically decorated with running spirals, between which are inserted paired leaves. The motif of the running spiral was perhaps borrowed from Aegean art, where it was widely used as a decorative element on wall paintings (see fig. 38) and pottery, among other artifacts.¹ At Qatna this type of spiral is most prominent on the wall paintings from Room N of the Royal Palace (cat. no. 69b), which are dated to the middle of the second millennium B.C. It is also seen, with less careful workmanship, on painted Qatna pottery. Its appearance on cylinder seals points to the popularity of this imported motif during the Late Bronze Age in Syria. PP

1. Compare S. Marinatos and Hirmer 1973, figs. 22, IX, 39, 76, 78, 80, 81, 109, XXX, 154, 169, 171, etc.



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EGYPTIAN VESSEL

Gabbro

Height 15 cm (5⅞ in.); diameter 29.1 cm (11½ in.)

Qatna, Royal Tomb

Late Bronze Age context, 15th–14th century B.C.

Egypt, Dynasty 1–2 manufacture, ca. 3000–2700 B.C.

Homs Museum, Homs, Syria MSH02G-i2369

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AMPHORA

White calcite

Height 43.2 cm (17 in.)

Qatna, Royal Tomb

Late Bronze Age, 15th–14th century B.C.

Homs Museum, Homs, Syria MSH02G-i993



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Fifty-six stone vessels were discovered in the Royal Tomb of Qatna and in the corridor leading down to it from Hall A of the Royal Palace, most of them made of white calcite, others of serpentine, granite, and other hardstones.¹ Stone vessels found at Qatna occur in various shapes, many of which resemble Egyptian types. Some of the vessels were imported directly from Egypt, while others, derived from Egyptian archetypes, were produced in local workshops in the Syro-Levantine region, a supposition supported by the quantity of such vessels found at sites such as Qatna, Ugarit, and Kamid el-Loz. However, in most cases, it is difficult to distinguish between imported Egyptian vessels and locally produced, “Egyptianizing” types.

The vessel above, a large, heavy jar, was found standing in the main chamber of the tomb. It has a squat form without a neck and two tubular lug handles on the shoulders. The type is usually termed an Archaic jar, since it was produced in Egypt during Dynasties 1 and 2 (ca. 3000–2700 B.C.; see cat. no. 143). Such jars were often traded or brought as gifts to Syria during the second millennium B.C. When this vessel was in the inventory of the tomb before the destruction of 1340 B.C., it was already one and a half millennia old. Although its antiquity was probably not recognized, the vessel must nevertheless have been highly valued as an exotic item because of its

