

---

## THE STANDARDS ON THE VICTORY STELE OF NARAM-SIN

---

Renate Marian van Dijk

Department of Ancient Studies

University of Stellenbosch

Private Bag X1

Matieland

7602 South Africa

Email: [rmvandijk@hotmail.com](mailto:rmvandijk@hotmail.com)

(Received 06/01/2016; accepted 20/04/2016)

---

### ABSTRACT

The Victory Stele of Naram-Sin is one of the most well-known works of art from Mesopotamia, and has been much studied. However, little has been written on the standards depicted on the Victory Stele. The intention of this paper is to study these standards and thus further the academic dialogue on them by addressing questions such as how the standards function, what they look like, with whom or what they are associated, and who or what they represent. The iconographic evidence of the Victory Stele itself will be examined to place the standards within their context. Similar iconographic depictions, which can assist in identifying the appearance of the standards and may suggest their deeper meaning, will be considered. Textual evidence from contemporary inscriptions from the reign of Naram-Sin may further help in the identification of the standards.

### INTRODUCTION

Hansen (2003:189) describes the Akkadian Period as “an era of profound artistic creativity, reaching one of the peaks of artistic achievement in the history of Mesopotamian art — and even in the history of world art.” One of the most famous works of art from this period is the Victory Stele of Naram-Sin, a limestone monument of about two metres in height which illustrates Naram-Sin’s victory over the Lullubi. The stele was discovered in 1898 in the excavations led by M. Jacques de Morgan on the Acropolis of Susa, where it was taken as war booty from the city of Sippar by the Elamite king Šutruk-Nahhunte, and is today housed in the Louvre in

Paris (Sb 4). Naram-Sin appears as the focus of the stele.<sup>1</sup> In front of Naram-Sin, on the right of the Stele, are the defeated Lullubi, and following him, below and to the left, are registers of soldiers of his army. In the register just below Naram-Sin are three figures. One of these carries a spear, and two carry standards. For such a well-known artefact, there has been little written on the standards depicted on this stele. For example, in the original excavation report in which the stele was published, de Morgan, Jéquier and Lampre (1900:151) wrote, “[q]uant à la nature de ces insignes, il est mieux de ne pas chercher à l’expliquer, les conjectures étant dépourvues de bases”.<sup>2</sup> More recently, in Bänder’s (1995) monograph on the Naram-Sin Victory Stele, only a page and a half are devoted to these standards, and, although the appearance of the standards is described, there is no attempt to understand their symbolic meaning or place them within a broader context (1995:228-229). Mayer-Opificius (1996:214-215) attempts to explain and identify the standards, but there are problems with her arguments.<sup>3</sup> The aim of this paper is therefore to further the discussion on the standards on the Naram-Sin Victory Stele by examining both the iconographic evidence on the stele itself and the textual evidence gleaned from contemporary inscriptions.

## NUMBER OF STANDARDS

There are two standards held by figures in the upper register of soldiers below the figure of Naram-Sin. Winter (2010d:138) describes the three figures in this register as the “elite guard accompanied by a probable officer”, with the “elite guard” being the two standard bearers and the “probable officer” the figure in front of the standard bearers who carries the spear. Börker-Klähn (1982:Abb 26k) reconstructs the figure in the second register below the two standard bearers as holding a third standard with the emblem<sup>4</sup> of an eagle with outstretched wings [Fig. 1]. Bänder (1995:229) suggests that

---

<sup>1</sup> For the figure of Naram-Sin on his Victory Stele, see Winter (2010b).

<sup>2</sup> “[a]s to the nature of these insignia, it is best not to try to search for an explanation, as any conjecture would be baseless”.

<sup>3</sup> See below.

<sup>4</sup> The emblem of a standard is the symbol which surmounts the shaft.

this standard is similar to the standards on Eannatum's Stele of the Vultures (Louvre AO 16109, 50, 2346, 2348)<sup>5</sup> and the fragments of the Gudea stela (Louvre AO 4576 and Ş EŞEM 5811 and EŞEM 5824).<sup>6</sup> In Börker-Klähn's reconstruction, this suggested third standard is different from the two standards in the upper register in that it has a shorter shaft and it is not decorated with tassels. Furthermore, the area in which the emblem would appear is damaged,<sup>7</sup> making the reconstruction and identification of any emblem here difficult, if not impossible. In Bänder's reconstruction of this standard (Bänder 1995: Taf. LXIX.c) [Fig. 2], it looks like a spear. Because other soldiers on the Naram-Sin Victory Stele carry spears with shorter shafts and no tassels, it is more likely that the shaft which Börker-Klähn reconstructs as a standard is actually that of a spear.

## THE FUNCTION OF THE STANDARDS

Pongratz-Leisten (2011-2013:107-110) identifies six different types of standards: 1) divine standards, 2) royal standards, 3) standards in a ritual context, 4) standards in judicial procedures, 5) standards on military campaigns, and 6) standards in an architectural context. These types need not be mutually exclusive. For example, a divine standard may be used in judicial procedures or on military campaigns. Mayer-Opificius (1996:215) identifies the standards on the Naram-Sin Victory Stele as *Feldzeichen*, or battle standards, which represent "symbols of the squadrons taking part to the battle" (Nigro 1998a:291). According to Vidal (2009:43), military or battle standards had two major functions, "ideological (granting divine protection, symbolizing the *esprit de corps* of the units, etc.), and practical (facilitating command,

<sup>5</sup> For reconstructions and more on the Stele of the Vultures, see especially Winter (2010c), Barrelet (1970), Romano (2007) and Börker-Klähn (1982:124-125; Nr. 17).

<sup>6</sup> For reconstructions of these fragments, see Suter (2000:368 ST.24; 366 ST.23; 372 ST.28). Bänder (1995:229) only mentions AO 4576 and EŞEM 5811, but the same standard is represented on EŞEM 5824, and the latter has been included here for this reason. It is unclear why it was omitted from Bänder's analysis.

<sup>7</sup> A point conceded by Bänder (1995:229), "[d]er lange Schaft ist erhalten, ihre Form jedoch kaum noch zu erkennen. Die Relieffläche ist an dieser Stelle zerstört" ("the long shaft is normal, but its shape is barely recognizable. The relief surface is destroyed at this point").

control and communication of the troops).”

The standards on the Victory Stele of Naram-Sin are the first true battle standards in Mesopotamian iconography. Although standards accompany scenes of violence and war depicted during the Early Dynastic Period on the Stele of the Vultures, the so-called Standard of Ur (British Museum BM 121201), and the so-called Standard of Mari (Louvre AO 19820), the standards represented on these artefacts are not battle standards. The Stele of the Vultures is a monument recording a battle, but the standard on this monument is not associated with the human conflict on the so-called “historical” side of the Stele, but with the action of the deities on the so-called “mythological” side. Ningirsu holds enemies in a net and smashes the head of one enemy with a mace, so the standard is found in association with violence, and with the aftermath of some conflict, but this does not associate it directly with the battle. The standard on the Stele of the Vultures can therefore more accurately be described as being associated with the deities represented on the Stele, rather than being a battle standard. Similarly, while the so-called Standard of Ur (British Museum BM 121201) most likely does not represent an actual standard (Hansen 1988:45), three standards may be depicted on the upper register of its so-called “war side” (Suter 2000:179). However, as with the standard on the Stele of the Vultures, these standards appear in a scene depicting the aftermath of the battle and are therefore not associated directly with the battle. Furthermore, no emblems which would have surmounted the standards have survived, and these three shafts more likely belong to spears than to standards. The so-called “bull standard of Mari” on the so-called Standard of Mari (Louvre AO 19820) does not actually represent a standard, but a rein ring of a chariot (Calmeyer 1967:166).<sup>8</sup>

On the Stele of the Vultures and on a fragment of an Akkadian victory stele, probably from the reign of Sargon (Louvre Sb 2),<sup>9</sup> the enemies are held in a net, while on a fragment of a stele from the reign of Sargon (Louvre Sb 3)<sup>10</sup> and a fragment of a

---

<sup>8</sup> For the reconstruction of the bull emblem as a standard, see Parrot (1956:140, 145, Pl. LVII.C), and for the reconstruction of the bull emblem as a rein ring, see Calmeyer (1967:Abb.6).

<sup>9</sup> See Amiet (1976:76-77 No. 61a-d) for images of this stele fragment.

<sup>10</sup> See Amiet (1976:75 No. 5) for an image of this stele fragment.

stele from the vicinity of Nasiriyah (Iraq Museum IM 55639),<sup>11</sup> the enemies are bound. In these examples, the scenes depicted occur after the battle when the victory has already been achieved. Conversely, the scene on the Naram-Sin Victory Stele represents the moment of the victory, and the action is ongoing. Winter (2010d:133) describes the Akkadian soldiers as moving “through time, into battle against the Lullubi”. The Akkadian army is (still) in the process of attaining victory. A wounded enemy soldier falls to the ground in front of Naram-Sin, grasping an arrow which has pierced his neck.<sup>12</sup> Further to the right, other enemy soldiers beg for mercy, but they have yet to be subjugated — they are not yet restrained as in the aforementioned representations. The standards on the Naram-Sin Victory Stele are therefore directly and explicitly associated with the battle, and could represent battle standards.

As de Morgan, Jéquier and Lampre (1900:151) point out, the standards on the Naram-Sin Victory Stele reveal “dans les armées de Naram-Sin une organisation méthodique”<sup>13</sup> which appears to be absent in the earlier depictions of battles, such as those mentioned above. This difference in the representations of combat may reflect a difference in the actual organisation of combat itself during the Akkadian Period as compared to that of the Early Dynastic Period. The fact that the standards on the Naram-Sin Victory Stele represent the first true battle standards in Mesopotamian iconography may be because these standards represent the first battle standards in actuality. During the Early Dynastic Period the conflicts were between city-states, but during the Akkadian Period the empire was made up of different city-states. According to Hamblin (2006:95), “Only a partial understanding of the Akkadian ... military systems can be obtained from fragmentary bits and pieces of information”, and the structure of the Akkadian army is therefore difficult to discern. However, if the structure of the Akkadian army mirrored the composition of the Akkadian empire, then the army also would have been made up of units from different city-states. If the battle standards are representative of different squadrons, and if the squadrons came

---

<sup>11</sup> See Strommenger (1962:Pl. 118) for an image of this stele fragment.

<sup>12</sup> This weapon has been described as both a spear (e.g., Bahrani 2008:110) and an arrow (e.g., Nigro 1998a:290). By comparison to the arrow held in Naram-Sin’s hand and to the spears held by the Akkadian soldiers, it is more likely an arrow.

<sup>13</sup> “A methodical organisation within the armies of Naram-Sin”.

from different cities, this may then reflect the organisation of not only Naram-Sin's army, but also of the Akkadian empire. Therefore, the reason that there are no battle standards in earlier iconography would be because the Early Dynastic armies were not made up of squadrons from different places which would have needed to be differentiated and led with the use of battle standards.

If, as battle standards, the standards on Naram-Sin's Victory Stele represent the squadrons of different cities, or if, as Vidal (2009:43) suggests, granted divine protection, each standard may reflect or be associated with either a city or city-state, or a deity, or both. The iconographies of these standards and contemporary written sources may give some insight into who or what they symbolised or with whom or what these standards were associated.

## ICONOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE

### The first standard

There are two standards depicted on the Naram-Sin Victory Stele, and both are unique in Akkadian period iconography. The standard closest to Naram-Sin takes the form of a long handled weapon with a narrow blade<sup>14</sup> which is surmounted by a plinth upon which is a figure who holds a long object. According to Bahrani (2008:109), this standard "appears to carry a small image of a deity at the top". However, it is unusual for deities to be depicted with wings. During the Akkadian period, Ištar is sometimes depicted with wings,<sup>15</sup> but she has two wings represented, one on either side of her body, while the figure on the Naram-Sin standard is depicted in profile so that the two wings are represented together emerging from the figure's back. Additionally, the figure on the standard appears to have a tail, and can therefore not be a human or a deity. Bänder (1995:229) describes this figure instead as "ein geflügeltes Mischwesen",<sup>16</sup> Seidl (2011-2013:114) describes it as a "Mischwesen",<sup>17</sup> and Mayer-

---

<sup>14</sup> Amiet (1976:31) describes this weapon as "une longue hache-hallebarde", or a long spear-axe, but it may rather represent a narrow-bladed piercing axe.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Boehmer (1965: Taf. XXXII.377, 379 and 382).

<sup>16</sup> "A winged Mischwesen/hybrid creature".

Opificius (1996:214-215) identifies it as a scorpion-man.

The scorpion-man is found most commonly in the iconography of the Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods (Green 1993-1997:250; 1985:75), but its earliest attestation is during the Early Dynastic Period<sup>18</sup> where it is depicted on cylinder seals<sup>19</sup> and on the front panel of the Great Lyre from the Early Dynastic Royal Tombs at Ur (University of Pennsylvania B17694).<sup>20</sup> During the Akkadian period, the scorpion-man is depicted on a cylinder seal now housed in the Louvre (AO 25305)<sup>21</sup> which depicts two battles — the first in which the sun god and a second deity battle with a vegetation god, and the second in which the scorpion-man fights in a duel with swords against a god. This scorpion-man has rays emanating from its body, which suggests an association with the sun god, an association which is more explicit in the Neo-Assyrian period when scorpion-men are depicted supporting a winged solar disc.<sup>22</sup> This link between the scorpion-man and the sun god may associate the standard on the Naram-Sin Victory Stele with the sun god. However, the scorpion-men on the artefacts from the Early Dynastic and Akkadian periods do not have wings, as the figure on the standard on the Naram-Sin Victory Stele does. Wings therefore appear to be a later addition to the iconography of the scorpion-man, and the figure on the standard on the Naram-Sin Victory Stele therefore cannot represent a scorpion-man.

Amiet (1976:31) identifies the figure surmounting the standard as a winged lion holding a weapon. This creature can be identified as the lion-griffon.<sup>23</sup> Collon

---

<sup>17</sup> “A hybrid creature”.

<sup>18</sup> Green (1993-1997:250) differentiates between the Early Dynastic scorpion-men which are depicted with the bodies of scorpions and the heads and limbs of humans, and the later representations in which the scorpion-man has the upper body of a human, and the lower body of a bird with a scorpion tail, and understands them to be two separate figures. Seidl (1989:170) regards them as representing the same figure.

<sup>19</sup> See von der Osten (1934:Pl. VI.47), Amiet (1980a:Pl.95.1245C, Pl.107.1427), and Teissier (1984:125 Fig. 335).

<sup>20</sup> For an image of this shell plaque, see Woolley (1934:Pl.105). For a discussion on the Great Lyre, see Hansen (1998:53-57). For bull-lyres in general, see van Dijk (2013).

<sup>21</sup> See Amiet (1980b:59 Fig. II-20).

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, a carnelian cylinder seal now in the British Museum (BM 102966). See Collon (2001:Pl.XVI.211) for this seal.

<sup>23</sup> Also known as the lion-dragon. For more on the lion-griffon, see Green (1993-1997:258) and Collon (1986:44-45).

(2006:101) identifies the lion-griffon as the “classic version of the Anzu-bird”, and dates this identification to the third millennium B.C.E., whereas according to Wiggermann (1992:185) the lion-griffon only came to represent Anzu<sup>24</sup> after the Neo-Sumerian period. Imdugud/Anzu is more commonly identified as the lion-headed eagle. That the lion-griffon and the lion-headed eagle were originally understood as two separate beings is evidenced by an Early Dynastic engraved shell plaque from Tello which is now in the Louvre (AO 328) (Parrot 1948:114; 113 Fig. 27.m) upon which both the lion-headed eagle and the lion-griffon are represented on two registers which are separated by a band with two stylised eyes. Fuhr-Jaepfelt (1972:81) describes the association of these motifs as “rätselhaft”.<sup>25</sup> The lion-griffon was the mount of the storm-god (Green 2003:27-33), and the fact that both the lion-griffon and the lion-headed eagle were related to the storm god may explain their inclusion together on this plaque. Also, because both the lion-griffon and the lion-headed eagle were associated with the storm god, Amiet (1976:31) may be justified when he states that the lion-griffon emblem on the Naram-Sin Victory Stele is closely related to the emblem on the standard on the Stele of the Vultures, which he identifies as a representation of Imdugud.<sup>26</sup>

As well as on the Early Dynastic plaque from Tello, the lion-griffon was depicted on Akkadian period cylinder seals where it is associated with the storm god,<sup>27</sup> but in all known examples the lion-griffon is shown on all fours. It is depicted rearing on its hind legs on cylinder seals from the Neo-Sumerian period onwards.<sup>28</sup> On terracotta plaques dating to the Isin-Larsa or Old Babylonian period it is found holding a staff<sup>29</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Anzu in Akkadian, Imdugud in Sumerian.

<sup>25</sup> “Puzzling”.

<sup>26</sup> The appearance of the standard on the Stele of the Vultures has been much debated. The emblem of this standard appears similar to the lion-headed eagle emblem held by Ningirsu, but the head of this winged creature has not survived. It is therefore uncertain whether it represents Imdugud (Bahrani 2008:151; Winter 2010c:9, 42 Fig.3; Sarre 1903:336-337; Moortgat 1969:43) or a bird (Braun-Holzinger 2013:75; Seidl 2006-2008:311; Barrelet 1970:247 Fig. 10b, 250 Fig. 12), and specifically an eagle (Börker-Klähn 1982:124; de Sarzec and Heuzey 1884-1912:101; Parrot 1948:97; Romano 2007:16).

<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Boehmer (1965:Taf. XXX.362-366, Taf. XXXI.367-374).

<sup>28</sup> For a Neo-Sumerian example, see Collon (1982:Pl. LII.471). For Isin-Larsa and Old Babylonian examples, see Collon (1986:Pl. V.7, 15, Pl. XIII.127, 131-137).

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, McCown, Haines and Hansen (1967:Pl. 143.2) for a plaque from Nippur



and is therefore similar in appearance to the figure surmounting the standard on the Naram-Sin Victory Stele. Although the lion-griffon is found on all fours in Akkadian period iconography, by comparison to depictions of the lion-griffon in later periods, it is most likely this figure which surmounts the first standard on the Naram-Sin Victory Stele.

## The second standard

The second standard is surmounted by five balls or discs. This standard is different to the Uruk period ringed pole in that the balls appear to be solid, there is an odd number of these balls, and the shaft of the standard is thinner, whereas the Uruk period ringed pole has rings on either side of the shaft, there is an even number of rings, and the shaft appears thicker.<sup>30</sup> Although different to the Uruk Period ringed pole, the standard on the Naram-Sin Victory Stele is similar to the rod with balls of the Neo-Sumerian period. It is also known as the “Kugelstab”<sup>31</sup> (Collon 1980-83:299), the “Kugelstandarte”<sup>32</sup> (Mayer-Opificius 1996:215) or the “Kugelstabstandarte”<sup>33</sup> (Bänder 1995:229) “Scheibenstange”<sup>34</sup> (Andrae 1933:49), “globe staff” (Porada 1948:34) and “standard with ... dots” (Buchanan 1981:226). From the Isin-Larsa period the shaft is shorter and it is held by a deity as a rod or sceptre, rather than as a standard. Mayer-Opificius (1996:214-215) suggests that the rod with balls may be associated with the goddess Ištar, but in later periods when the rod with balls was held as a sceptre, it was always a god which held it, and never a goddess (Black and Green 1992:155), which makes this identification unlikely. The god holding the rod with balls has been identified as the weather god (Prinz 1915:128-129) and as the sun god (Ward

---

now housed in the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (53-11-96), and Barrelet (1968:LXXXI.840) for a plaque from Eshnunna now housed in the Louvre (AO 12451).

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, the ringed poles surmounting cattle byres on a stone vase from Khafajeh and on a fragment of a limestone vessel now in the Louvre (AO 8842) (Goff 1963:Fig. 469 and Fig. 471 respectively).

<sup>31</sup> “Ball-rod”.

<sup>32</sup> “Ball standard”.

<sup>33</sup> “Ball-rod standard”.

<sup>34</sup> “Disc rod”.

1910:379, 413; Frankfort 1939:161; Collon 1980-83:299; Bänder 1995:229 n.1030). According to Black and Green (1992:155) “an identification of Šamaš may be the more plausible suggestion, for the symbol is also occasionally associated with the bull-man”. An association with Šamaš may be supported by the fact that the stele was originally erected in Sippar, a city sacred to the sun god. However, on an Old Babylonian cylinder seal now housed in the British Museum (BM 89757)<sup>35</sup> a god holding a ringed pole is depicted with the sun god, and on a second cylinder seal (BM 89238)<sup>36</sup> the storm god rests his foot on a bull and holds a ringed pole and is depicted alongside the sun god. The sun god can therefore not be represented by every god holding a ringed pole, and the ringed pole may be representative of power or divine authority rather than being representative of a specific deity.

## TEXTUAL EVIDENCE

Unfortunately the Akkadian text inscribed on the Naram-Sin Victory Stele is fragmentary and what remains does not mention the standards or any deities with whom the standards may be associated.<sup>37</sup> Other contemporary inscriptions may throw light onto which deities are represented by the standards depicted on the stele.

In two inscriptions Naram-Sin is called the “general of the god Ilaba”<sup>38</sup> (Frayne 1993:96, 98), and the “leader of the troops of the city of the god Ilaba”<sup>39</sup> (Frayne 1993:88), with Ilaba being identifiable as Zababa (Nigro 1998b:93), and the troops mentioned in the latter text being those of the city of Kish. It is therefore possible that Naram-Sin and his troops marched and battled by Zababa’s order and with his aid and protection. One of the standards on the Naram-Sin Victory Stele may then be representative of or associated with this god or with the city of Kish. A *Historical*

---

<sup>35</sup> See Collon (1986:Pl. XXXI.433) for this cylinder seal.

<sup>36</sup> See Collon (1986:Pl. XXXII.445) for this cylinder seal.

<sup>37</sup> For a transliteration and English translation of the original Akkadian inscription, see Frayne (1993:143-144 RIMEP E2.1.4.31).

<sup>38</sup> For a transliteration and English translation of this text, see Frayne (1993:95-99 RIMEP E2.1.4.3).

<sup>39</sup> For a transliteration and English translation of this text, see Frayne (1993:88-90 RIMEP E2.1.4.1).

*fragment* of Sargon from Uruk<sup>40</sup> mentions “the standard of the god Zababa” (Barton 1929:117), and, although no similar reference is found in any known Naram-Sin inscription, the Sargon inscription reveals that such a standard did exist.

From the Old Babylonian period Zababa was associated with Ningirsu or Ninurta, both of whom also had martial aspects to their personalities (Black and Green 1992:155), and it is possible that Zababa shared similar iconography with Ningirsu and Ninurta already during the Akkadian period. There is no known iconography for Zababa during the Akkadian period. The symbol most commonly associated with Zababa is the vulture-headed staff<sup>41</sup> depicted on Kassite period *kudurrus*,<sup>42</sup> but according to Strawn (2005:193-194) the lion was also associated with Zababa by virtue of the power and force associated with this war god. As mentioned above, the lion-griffon was related to Imdugud/Anzu which was associated with Ningirsu and Ninurta, but it had more leonine features. It is therefore possible that the lion-griffon on the Naram-Sin Victory Stele was associated with Zababa.

The imperial deities of the Akkadian Empire were Zababa and Ištar, both of whom were deities associated with war. Ištar is associated with Zababa in several Naram-Sin inscriptions.<sup>43</sup> One of these inscriptions states that “through the love which the goddess Aštar [Ištar] showed him [Naram-Sin], he was victorious in nine battles in one year” (Frayne 1993:113 RIMEP E2.1.4.10), and another states that “the goddess Aštar gave him [Naram-Sin] no rival” (Frayne 1993:131 RIMEP E2.1.4.25). Ištar was therefore closely related to Naram-Sin’s victories in warfare, and she may be associated with one of the standards, perhaps with the rod with balls, as suggested by Mayer-Opificius (1996:215), as noted above. Ištar was the patron deity of the

<sup>40</sup> For a transliteration and English translation of this text, see Barton (1929:116-117).

<sup>41</sup> Leick (1998:Fig. 10 description) identifies the sceptre as being surmounted with a vulture-headed emblem, but Black and Green (1992:187) and Seidl (1957-1971:490; 1989:74) identify this sceptre as an “eagle-headed staff” or “*Adlerstab*” (“eagle staff”) respectively. It is more likely that a vulture is represented due to the vulture’s association with war and battlefields. See van Buren (1939:84-85) for examples of this association.

<sup>42</sup> For a full discussion on *kudurrus* and the symbols depicted on them, see Seidl (1989). See also Seidl (1980-1983:275-277).

<sup>43</sup> See for example Frayne (1993:88-90 RIMEP E2.1.4.1; 90-94 RIMEP E2.1.4.2; 95-99 RIMEP E2.1.4.3; 113-115 RIMEP E2.1.4.10; 130-131 RIMEP E2.1.4.25).

Akkadian capital city Agade,<sup>44</sup> and if the standard was associated with this goddess, it could also have represented this city, or the soldiers of this city.

On the other hand, one Naram-Sin inscription states that “[t]he god Enlil (is) his [Naram-Sin’s] (personal) deity (and) the god Ilaba, mighty one of the gods, is his clan (god)” (Frayne 1993:104 RIMEP E2.1.4.6), and another that Naram-Sin was the “gov(er)nor of the god Enlil”<sup>45</sup> (Frayne 1993:96 RIMEP2.1.4.3). Naram-Sin may therefore have fought with the support of the god Enlil. Enlil was the patron deity of the city of Nippur, the religious centre of Mesopotamia. Therefore, it would have been important for Naram-Sin to claim the support of this powerful god. As with Zababa, there is no known iconography for Enlil during the Akkadian period. On the Kassite period *kudurrus* his symbol is the horned headdress (Seidl 1989:35, 144). Although there is no known iconography for Enlil during the Akkadian Period, this does not discount him from being represented by the rod with balls standard on the Naram-Sin Victory Stele. Enlil was one of the most powerful Mesopotamian deities, and could therefore have been associated with the rod with balls if, as suggested above, the latter was symbolic of power or divine authority.

The matter of which deities are represented by the standards is further complicated by an inscription which states that Naram-Sin was victorious in battle due to the aid of Ištar and Enlil<sup>46</sup> (Frayne 1993:94). If this text reflects the identities of deities with whom the standards on the Naram-Sin Victory Stele are associated, then Ištar and Enlil are represented by the two standards, and not Zababa. However, Zababa is a better candidate to be represented by the lion-griffon standard than either Ištar or Enlil. One final problem for the identification of the standards on the Naram-Sin Victory Stele is that the prevalence of certain deities with warfare in the inscriptions of Naram-Sin may not reflect the symbolism of the standards on his Victory Stele.

---

<sup>44</sup> For more on Ištar as the patron deity of Agade, see Asher-Greve and Westenholz (2013:62, 95, 105-108).

<sup>45</sup> For transliterations and English translations of these texts, see Frayne (1993:104-108 RIMEP E2.1.4.6; 95-99 RIMEP E2.1.4.3).

<sup>46</sup> For a transliteration and English translation of this text, see Frayne (1993:90-94 RIMEP E2.1.4.2).

## CONCLUSIONS

The standards on the Victory Stele of Naram-Sin represent the first true battle standards in Mesopotamian iconography. These standards can be identified by their appearance, but their deeper meaning or symbolism is more difficult to discern. The two standards represented are a standard surmounted by an emblem in the form of a rearing lion-griffon, and a rod with balls. As battle standards, the two standards on Naram-Sin's Victory Stele would reflect the standard of a military unit, and this unit would be from a particular city or city-state. Because cities and city-states had patron deities, each standard may also have been associated with a particular deity. If the standards are identified with deities, the identification of these deities remains uncertain, because the rod with balls on the Stele is unique in the Akkadian period, and the lion-griffon standard is unique in Mesopotamian iconography, and therefore no direct iconographic *comparanda* exist for either standard. Texts reveal that the deities most frequently and commonly associated with battle during the reign of Naram-Sin were Zababa, Ištar and Enlil. It is possible then that the lion-griffon standard was associated with or representative of the god Zababa and Kish, the city of which he was patron deity, and that the rod with balls was associated with or representative of Ištar and Agade, the city of which she was patron deity. These standards would in this way have been the standards which led or rallied and led the troops of Kish and Agade respectively. The standards could also have been associated with or representative of Zababa and Enlil as Naram-Sin's personal and clan deities respectively, and, by extension with the cities of Kish and Nippur. Whichever deities or cities are associated with or represented by the lion-griffon standard and the rod with balls on the Naram-Sin Victory Stele, the standards can be seen as the divine sanctioning and support of Naram-Sin's military expeditions and represent the first true battle standards in Mesopotamian iconography.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Amiet, P 1976. *L'art d'Agadé en Musée du Louvre*. Paris: Éditions des Musées Nationaux.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1980a. *La glyptique Mésopotamienne archaïque*. Paris: Éditions du CNRS.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1980b. The mythological repertory in cylinder seals of the Agade Period (c. 2335-2155 B.C.), in Porada 1980:35-59.
- Andrae, W 1933. *Die Ionische Säule; Bauform oder Symbol?* Verlag Studien zur Bauforschung 5. Berlin: Verlag für Kunstwissenschaft.
- Aruz, J & Wallenfels, R (eds) 2003. *Art of the first cities: the third millennium B.C. from the Mediterranean to the Indus*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- Asher-Greve, J M & Goodnick Westenholz, J 2013. *Goddesses in context: on divine powers, roles, relationships and gender in Mesopotamian textual and visual sources*. OBO 259. Fribourg/Göttingen: Fribourg Academic Press/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Bahrani, Z 2008. *Rituals of war: the body and violence in Mesopotamia*. New York: Zone Books.
- Bänder, D 1995. *Die Siegesstele des Naramsîn und ihre Stellung in Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte*. Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte Band 103. Idstein: Schulz-Kirchner Verlag.
- Barrelet, M-T 1968. *Figurines et reliefs en terre cuite de la Mésopotamie Antique I: Potiers, termes de métier, procédés de fabrication et production*. Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1970. Peut-on remettre en question la "restitution matérielle de la Stèle des Vautours"? *JNES* 29/4:233-258.
- Barton, G A 1929. *The royal inscriptions of Sumer and Akkad*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Black, J & Green, A 1992. *Gods, demons and symbols of ancient Mesopotamia*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Boehmer, R M 1965. *Die Entwicklung der Glyptik während der Akkad-Zeit*. UAVA 4. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter & Co.
- Börker-Klähn, J 1982. *Alt Vorderasiatische Bildstelen und Vergleichbare Felsreliefs*. BaF 4. Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern.
- Braun-Holzinger, E A 2013. *Frühe Götterdarstellungen in Mesopotamien*. OBO 261. Fribourg/Göttingen: Fribourg Academic Press/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Buchanan, B 1981. *Early Near Eastern seals in the Yale Babylonian Collection*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
- Calmeyer, P 1967. Zur Rekonstruktion der <<Standarte>> von Mari, in Kupper 1967:161-169.
- Collon, D 1980-1983. Kugelbaum, Kugelstab, *RIA* 6:299.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1982. *Catalogue of the Western Asiatic seals in the British Museum: Cylinder seals II: Akkadian, Post Akkadian, Ur III periods*. London: British Museum Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1986. *Catalogue of Western Asiatic seals in the British Museum: Cylinder seals III: Isin-Larsa and Old Babylonian periods*. London: British Museum Publications.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2001. *Catalogue of Western Asiatic seals in the British Museum: Cylinder seals V: Neo-Assyrian and Neo-Babylonian periods*. London: The British Museum Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2006. The iconography of Ninurta, in Taylor 2006:100-109.
- De Morgan, J, Jéquier, G, & Lampre, G 1900. *Fouilles a Suse en 1897-1898 et 1898-1899*. MDP I. Paris: Ernest Leroux.
- De Sarzec, E, & Huezey, L 1884-1912. *Découvertes en Chaldée*. 2 Vols. Paris: Leroux.
- FfytL-UNCuyo, 2013. *Calidoscopio del pasado. XIV Jornados Interschuelas/Departamentos de*

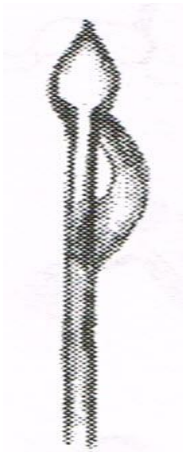
- Historia*. Mendoza: FFyL-UNCuyo (CD-ROM).
- Frankfort, H 1939. *Cylinder seals: A documentary essay on the art and religion of the ancient Near East*. London: MacMillan and Co.
- Frayne, D 1993. *Sargonic and Gutian periods (2334-2113 BC)*. RIMEP 2. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Fuhr-Jaepfelt, I 1972. *Materialen zur Ikonographie des Löwenadlers Anzu-Imdugud*. München: Scharl + Strohmeyer.
- Gasche, H & Hrouda, B 1996. *Collectanea orientalia histoire, arts de l'espace et industrie de la terre: Études offertes en hommage à Agnès Spycket*. CPOA I 3. Neuchâtel: Recherches et Publications.
- Goff, B L 1963. *Symbols of prehistoric Mesopotamia*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
- Green, A 1985. A note on the "Scorpion-Man" and Pazuzu, *Iraq* 47:75-82.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1993-1997. Mischwesen. B. Archäologie. Mesopotamien, *RIA* 8:246-264.
- Green, A R W 2003. *The storm-god in the ancient Near East*. Biblical and Judaic Studies Volume 8. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.
- Hamblin, W J 2006. *Warfare in the ancient Near East to 1600 BC: Holy warriors at the dawn of history*. London: Routledge.
- Hansen, D 1998. Art of the royal tombs of Ur: A brief interpretation, in Zettler and Horne 1998:43-72.
- Hansen, D P 2003. Art of the Akkadian dynasty, in Aruz and Wallenfels 2003:189-198.
- Kupper, J-R (ed.) 1967. *XVe Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale organisée par le Groupe François Thureau-Dangin (Liège, 4-8 juillet 1966): La civilisation de Mari*. Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Liège — Fascicule CLLXXXII. Paris: Société d'Édition << Les Belles Lettres >>.
- Leick, G 1998. *A dictionary of Near Eastern mythology*. London: Routledge.
- Mayer-Opificius, R 1996. Feldzeichen, in Gasche & Hrouda 1996:213-226.
- McCown, D E, Haines, R C & Hansen, D P 1967. *Nippur I: Temple of Enlil, Scribal Quarter, and soundings. Excavations of the Joint Expedition to Nippur of the University Museum of Philadelphia and the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*. OIP 78 Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Moortgat, A 1969. *The art of ancient Mesopotamia; The classical art of the near East*. London & New York: Phaidon.
- Nigro, L 1998a. Visual role and ideological meaning of the enemies in the royal Akkadian relief, in Prosecky 1998:283-298.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1998b. The two steles of Sargon: iconology and visual propaganda at the beginning of royal Akkadian relief, *Iraq* 60:85-102.
- Parrot, A 1948. *Tello: Vingt campagnes de fouilles (1877-1933)*. Paris: Albin Michel.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1956. *Le Temple d'Ishtar*. MAM 1. Paris: Geuthner.
- Pongratz-Leisten, B 2011-2013. Standarte (standard). A. Philologisch, *RIA* 13:106-110.
- Porada, E 1948. *Corpus of ancient Near Eastern seals in North American collections: the collection of the Pierpont Morgan Library*. Vols 1 and 2. Washington D.C.: Pantheon Books Inc.
- \_\_\_\_\_ (ed.) 1980. *Ancient art in seals: essays by Pierre Amiet, Nimet Özgüç, and John Boardman*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Prinz, H 1915. *Altorientalische Symbolik*. Berlin: Karl Curtius Verlag.
- Prosecky, J (ed.) 1998. *Intellectual life of the ancient Near East. Papers presented at the 43<sup>rd</sup> Rencontre assyriologique internationale Prague, July 1-5, 1996*. Prague: Oriental

- Institute.
- Romano, L 2007. La Stele degli Avvoltoi: Una rilettura critica, *Vicino Oriente* XIII:3-23.
- Sarre, F 1903. Die altorientalischen Feldzeichen, mit besonderer Berücksichtigung eines unveröffentlichten Stückes, *Klio* 3:333-371.
- Seidl, U 1957-1971. Göttersymbole und -attribute. A. Archäologisch. I. Mesopotamien, *RIA* 3:484-490.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1980-1983. Kudurru. B. Bildschmuck, *RIA* 6:275-277.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1989. *Die babylonischen Kudurrereliefs: Symbole mesopotamischer Gottheiten*. OBO 87. Fribourg/Göttingen: Fribourg Academic Press/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2006-2008. Relief, *RIA* 11:308-318.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2011-2013. Standarte. B. Archäologisch, *RIA* 13:110-116.
- Strawn, B A 2005. "What is stronger than a lion?" *Leonine image and metaphor in the Hebrew Bible and the ancient Near East*. OBO 212. Fribourg/Göttingen: Fribourg Academic Press/Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
- Strommenger, E 1962. *Fünf Jahrtausende Mesopotamien: Die Kunst von Anfängen um 5000 v. Chr. bis zu Alexander dem Großen*. München: Hirmer Verlag.
- Suter, C E 2000. *Gudea's temple building: The representation of an early Mesopotamian ruler in text and image*. CM 17. Groningen: Styx Publications.
- Taylor, P (ed.) 2006. *The iconography of cylinder seals*. Warburg Institute Colloquia 9. London: The Warburg Institute.
- Teissier, B 1984. *Ancient Near Eastern cylinder seals from the Marcopoli Collection*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Van Buren, E D 1939. *The fauna of ancient Mesopotamia as represented in art*. AnOr 18. Rome: Pontificum Institutum Biblicum.
- Van Dijk, R M 2013. Mesopotamian Early Dynastic bull-lyres, in FfyL-UNCuyo 2013:n.p. (CD-ROM).
- Vidal, J 2009. The use of military standards by Old Babylonian armies, *Akkadica* 130/1:43-51.
- Von der Osten, H H 1934. *Ancient oriental seals in the collection of Mr. Edward T. Newell*. OIP 22. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ward, W H 1910. *The seal cylinders of Western Asia*. Washington: The Carnegie Institution.
- Wiggermann, F AM 1992. *Mesopotamian protective spirits: the ritual texts*. CM 1. Groningen: Styx.
- Winter, I J 2010a. *On art in the ancient Near East. Volume II: from the third millennium B.C.E. Culture and History of the Ancient Near East* Volume 34/2. London/Boston: Brill.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2010b. Sex, rhetoric, and the public monument: the alluring body of Naram-Sîn of Agade, in Winter 2010a:85-107.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2010c. After the battle is over: the Stele of the Vultures and the beginning of historical narrative in the art of the ancient Near East, in Winter 2010a:3-51.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2010d. How tall was Naram-Sîn's Victory Stele? Speculation on the broken bottom, in Winter 2010a:133-149.
- Woolley, L 1934. *The royal cemetery*. UE II New York: The Carnegie Corporation.
- Zettler, R L & Horne, L (eds) 1998. *Treasures from the royal tombs of Ur*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania.





**Fig.1:** Börker-Klähn's reconstruction of three standards (Börker-Klähn 1982:Nr. 26k detail)



**Fig. 2:** Bänder's reconstruction of the possible third standard (Bänder 1995: Taf. LXIX.c)



The standards on the Victory Stele of Naram-Sin (R.M. van Dijk)