

SASANIAN
STAMP SEALS
in The Metropolitan
Museum of Art

CHRISTOPHER J. BRUNNER

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

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Printed in Great Britain by Lund Humphries

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING IN PUBLICATION DATA

New York (City). Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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Bibliography: p.

Includes indexes.

1. Seals (Numismatics) – Iran. 2. Sassanids. 3. New York (City).
Metropolitan Museum of Art. I. Brunner, Christopher J. II. Title.

CD6255.N48 1978 737'.6 78-2845

ISBN 0-87099-176-0

Contents

Introduction	7
References Cited	13
Catalogue	19
Acquisition Numbers	41
Materials	45
Motifs	49
Index by Style	131
Index of Subsidiary and Decorative Elements	135
Inscriptions	139

Introduction

The Collection

The Metropolitan Museum of Art's acquisition of Sasanian stamp seals began soon after its incorporation in 1870. In 1873 the Museum purchased the collection of antiquities that Louis Palma de Cesnola (1832–1904) had assembled in Cyprus while serving there as American and Russian consul. Thus were acquired 13 of the present seals. They were eventually listed in the *Handbook of the Cesnola Collection of Antiquities from Cyprus*, published in 1914 (*Handbook*, see **References Cited**; for a chronological list of the seals, see **Acquisition Numbers**). One, no. 21, was illustrated in *A Descriptive Atlas of the Cesnola Collection of Cypriote Antiquities (Atlas)*, published 1885–1903. In 1881 the first president of the Museum, John Taylor Johnson, purchased with his own funds the seal collection of Charles William King (1818–88), the noted sigillographer of Trinity College, Cambridge, and presented it to the Museum. Originally 26 of these were classed as Sasanian; 24 have been retained as such in the present catalogue. King's own catalogue of the collection, dated February 28, 1878, was published by the Museum, presumably in 1884 (*MMA Hand-Book No. 9*). There King gives a leisurely discussion of each seal, but none is illustrated. For the inscriptions, he cites Edward Thomas as authority. In the following two decades the Museum's collection was considerably expanded through purchases from William Hayes Ward (1835–1916). Ward's unillustrated descriptions of the seals which the Museum acquired from him in 1886 appeared in 1895 (*MMA Hand-Book No. 12*).

In the present century the collection has grown by gifts, bequests, purchases, and site finds. Site acquisitions came only after H. H. von der Osten published a catalogue (Osten) of the Museum's Achaemenid, Greco-Persian, and Sasanian seals in 1931. Omitting some of the seals acquired from Ward, he illustrated impressions of most of the Sasanian seals and provided identifying data and very brief descriptions. Shortly after, the Museum's researches at Ctesiphon (1931–32) yielded three seals, one a site find. Work at Qasr-i Abu Nasr (1933–35) yielded one purchase and 11 site finds, along with numerous bullae. The bullae and the 11 seals, together with the seals that went to Tehran, were published in 1973 by R. N. Frye and P. O. Harper (*QAN*). There photographs of the seals (impressions plus sealing surface or profile)

and short descriptions are accompanied by discussion of the iconography. The Museum's excavations at Nishapur (1937–39) brought to light several seals, two of which are in the catalogue. Between the appearances of Osten and QAN, Museum acquisitions were illustrated in the *Survey of Persian Art* (SPA). Some of the seals published by Osten were illustrated in 1973 by R. Göbl (Göbl 1973).

Organization of the Catalogue

The present work provides a comprehensive analysis of all seal stones in the Museum's collection that are attributable to the Sasanian kingdom. It also includes several that might equally be ascribed to the Arsacid period, as well as one Roman seal bearing a Middle Persian inscription. The principle used for ordering and numbering the seals is physical shape. This feature is usually given in catalogues in a somewhat general way, despite the fact that the possible significance of shape variations cannot be well determined until their ranges of occurrence within a large corpus are known. The classification of a given seal within the system here used is usually clear. Some stones, however, require rather subjective judgment, due to the variance in skill of execution which they display. The **Catalogue** provides the physical data for each seal and coded references to the main motif, style, subsidiary and decorative elements, and epigraphy. The entire corpus is thus summarized, while the subsequent sections and indices facilitate the study of each aspect of a given seal within the context of the corpus. The importance of any one feature of a seal may best be judged against this background.

A persisting difficulty in the study of Sasanian seals is their chronology. Epigraphy offers valuable assistance; for, in spite of complications that are better perceived on the coinage, the Middle Persian script presents several definite paleographic stages. Some conclusions on chronology may also be drawn from seal shapes. A. D. H. Bivar (B.M., p. 24) provides this sequence:

ring bezels (shape I, especially I.A.1.b and I.B.1)	A.D. 3rd–4th century
ellipsoids (shape II.A–B)	4th–5th century
stone rings (shape II.C)	4th–5th century
domes (shape III.A)	5th–6th century

The relative chronology of these types may be supported by evidence from epigraphy and iconographic detail. Possible regional preferences (e.g., for the shapes II.C.3 and III.B, which seem to be survivals from the Arsacid period) are not known. Significant correlations sometimes appear between shapes and

materials – for example, the popularity of almandine garnet for bezels; but materials do not, in general, offer a secure guide for dating. The time spans given by Bivar are necessarily approximate, and the absolute chronology of individual stones remains a problem. This catalogue provides a dating almost solely for inscribed seals; the reader should bear in mind the shape sequence as a general indicator of a seal’s position in time. A useful partition of the Sasanian period, on the basis of political events and cultural developments, is:

early Sasanian	Ardašīr I to Šāpūr II	A.D. 224–379
middle Sasanian	Ardašīr II to Kawād	379–531
late Sasanian	Xusraw I to Yazdigard III	531–651

In this catalogue, Middle Persian proper names, text titles, and terms are cited in late and post-Sasanian phonemic form. Modern Persian place names are given in conventional anglicized forms.

Sasanian Seals and their Interpretation

The functions of Sasanian seals have been extensively discussed in recent studies; see especially B.M., Frye 1970, Göbl 1973, Leningrad, and *QAN*. (A bibliography of earlier publications is given in B.M., pp. 37–40, and repeated, with some additions, in Göbl 1973. For more recent articles, see Frye 1974, pp. 160–61). Use of the seals must have progressively expanded and become more formalized with the growth of the Sasanian bureaucracy. The finds at Qasr-i Abu Nasr and Takht-i Sulaiman well illustrate their omnipresence in legal and commercial functions at the middle and upper class levels of Iranian life.

Discussion of the seal motifs has been more restrained, and yet it is equally important. Seals, together with coins, are the most abundant class of cultural artifacts surviving from Sasanian Iran and Mesopotamia. The special value of the seals lies in their wide, freer range of imagery as compared with a *drahm* coin. The latter functioned in part as a propaganda document of the king, and its limited imagery is selected for its denotative value to the monarchy. But a man or a woman’s seal is a personal statement, even if the selection of a motif was conditioned by custom or caste restrictions.¹ A person’s portrait or name or his own (or his master’s) symbolic device was an evident assertion of identity; and one’s selection of another emblem, such as an animal in one of the well-defined heraldic poses, was no less so, even if it was widely shared.

1. It is regrettable that so few professional titles – chiefly “mage” and “scribe” – occur with images. Even so, the distribution of mages’ motifs over time should be studied.

The motifs attested by the seals and bullae thus constitute a set of shorthand documents on popular Sasanian culture. They might be termed hieroglyphs, holding in their imagery a wealth of common lore, mental associations, and feelings and values. That the king and nobility also used some of this imagery indicates its universality and recognized value within the culture.

The analogy with hieroglyphics seems a fruitful one, and the process of determining the meaning and connotation of a given image not dissimilar to decipherment. For a hieroglyphic must be resolved (a) against the background of the full corpus of which it is one item, (b) within the precise textual sign combinations where it is observed, (c) possibly with indications of its field of meaning from its form, and, one hopes, (d) with an accurate idea of the text contents. Inductive and deductive processes may proceed from there. If a parallel text in a known language exists, then the application of deduction and intuition is controlled. Iconographic analysis involves similar procedures and also encounters a control problem. In the study of Sasanian seals, there exists a notable example of a structure of meaning, not derived from, but preconceived and imposed upon the body of images (*SPA*, I, pp. 784–815). And echoes of the intuitive method remain, although some controls are available. One set, of course, is the overall body of Sasanian art; this is important, even though the distribution of its survivals is skewed toward propagandistic or sumptuary functions. Another set is the mass of ancient Iranian texts. These, it must first be said, rarely provide a clear and immediate explanation for the meaning of an image. But they do demonstrate a long-lasting and consistent Iranian value system and pattern of intellectual habits. These must be attended to, if the interpreter of iconography hopes to perceive a seal image in anything like the manner in which its owner did. While the Pahlavi texts are late compilations in their present form, such works as the *Dēnkard* and the *Bundahišn* are grounded in the Avestan scriptures, many of which are now lost. Their ultimate concerns are in harmony with those of traditional Iranian religion as manifested in the Younger Avestan texts: assurance of the stability and prosperity of the material world (the community of mankind, animals, and plant life) and the warding off of the evil beings through ritual worship of the gods and exercise of potent words, gestures, and objects. The marked astrological interests of late Zoroastrian texts doubtless reflect the earlier incorporation of astrology into Zoroastrian doctrine. The struggle between cosmic good and evil was a central feature of the religion's teaching. To this had been added early apocalyptic notions and a measured world-epoch, as is shown by the *Zand ī Wahman Yasn* (ed. and tr. B. T. Anklesaria, Bombay, 1957), which rests on a lost Avestan source.

A notable feature of ancient Iranian religious literature is its reluctance to engage in abstraction. It adheres to patterns of natural imagery and mythic event (with its network of personal relations and conflicts) to explicate the principles of existence. It can be no accident that Manicheism, which makes use of the basic framework of Zoroastrian myth, is similarly grounded in physical imagery and in literalism. Even in the scholasticism of the later mages, it is only by a cumbersome terminology formed with generous suffixation that a semi-abstract theology is attained.

Because of this intellectual consistency, the term “symbol” should be applied to seal motifs only with caution. The gesture of a hand (motif 9 a) is clearly univocal and symbolic; so is a heraldic device (9 b). But most other motifs may best be viewed as multivalent images. Some – portraits and devices – are explicitly personal. A few are specifically cultic, particularly those with a fire altar (1 d, 8 a). Mythical subjects appear with moderate frequency, and one of the most popular (2 a) seems related to the frequent domestic motifs (1 ba, bc, and 1 c). No single viewpoint accounts for the variety of animal imagery. The bull, horse, ram, cock, dog, and mythical Sēn were images rich in ancient cultural associations and involved with religious, as well as economic, values. Such animals as the elephant, stag, antelope, rabbit, pheasant, and duck would seem of interest primarily as aesthetic objects or embodiments of a physical quality (e.g., size or speed). But folkloric allusions, lost to the modern observer, may also be present. The occurrence of the lion, bear, and scorpion as motifs points to a broader basis for selection than that of formal Zoroastrian doctrine. Besides invoking the known westward spread of the genre of animal fable in Sanskrit literature, one may simply point out that, e.g., if the crow was regarded as the cleverest of birds, there must have been anecdotes showing why.

The multivalency of an image is illustrated by flowers. (The tulip will be seen as a recurring subject.) A flower depiction might evoke in a Sasanian viewer a complex of perceptions: the flower as a thing of beauty (the continuity of the aesthetic appreciation of flowers in Iranian culture is well known); the flower, through its use in daily life and in festivals, as an expression of human good will and joy; the flower as a manifestation of nature’s beneficence and promise of fructification; and more didactically, a particular flower as dedicated to a particular divinity. The viewer’s integral reaction to the image might thus be broken into a spectrum from the practical economic to the mythic aspect.

The tendency to narrowly explain or schematize the seal imagery (and so obscure understanding of Sasanian culture) finds a corrective in the study of

living societies. For instance, when one considers the place of the goat (both the domestic goat and the wild markhor) in the world of the Prasun and Kati Kafirs, a rich pattern of significance is revealed: the goat as a giver of food and an integral part of the economy, hence an appropriate object of sacrifice; the markhor, in particular (but with some effect on his domestic relative), as one who communes with the gods on inaccessible mountain slopes, hence serving as an avatar and figuring in myth and legend. The appearance of the goat as an artistic motif expresses its importance in the entire field of Kafir value.²

This catalogue attempts to furnish some notes on a given “hieroglyphic” image in Sasanian art and to cite its subject’s associations, even trivial ones, from Middle Persian literature. These constitute a reconstructable portion of the image’s meaning to its original user. Sometimes meaning must be established largely from internal evidence; in such cases, the approach is to offer minimum explanations consistent with the overall iconography.

I am grateful to the Metropolitan Museum for access to its collection. I especially appreciate the assistance of Prudence O. Harper, Curator of the Ancient Near East department, in facilitating this study.

2. See, e.g., Karl Jettmar, *Die Religionen des Hindukusch* (Stuttgart, 1975).

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Yale

Charles C. Torrey, “Pehlevi Seal Inscriptions from Yale Collections,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 52, 1932, pp. 201–07.

Yasna

B. N. Dhabhar, ed., *Pahlavi Yasna and Vispered*. Bombay, 1949.

Yāšt

Herman Lommel, tr., *Die Yāšt's des Avesta*. Göttingen, 1927.

Zand

B. N. Dhabhar, ed., *Zand-i Khūrtak Avistāk*. Bombay, 1927.

Zātspram

B. T. Anklesaria, *Vichitakiha-i Zatsparam, with Text and Introduction, Part I*. Bombay, 1964.

Catalogue

The purpose of the catalogue is to present systematically the physical data (shape, material, dimensions) for each stone, along with reference to the motif depicted on it, style of execution, and, when applicable, accessory iconography and inscriptions. The entry for each seal comprises the following, in order :

CATALOGUE NUMBER. Assigned on the basis of the stone's shape. Sasanian seals are most obviously divisible between relatively flat bezels (usually unperforated; the large seal no. 25 is an exception) and high, rounded shapes. Most common among the latter are ellipsoids and domes. Hence these terms are used here to denote general categories, within which the variant shapes are subsumed (e.g., those of the bronze seals, II.C.3 and III.B, which are approximations of the regular stone forms). In addition, occasional irregular shapes and a few exceptional ones occur. No. 143 could be Parthian, whether it dates to the Sasanian or the Arsacid period. No. 224 constitutes a distinct category but is of uncertain authenticity. An occasional difficulty in classification arises, whether an ambiguous seal should be called a modified ellipsoid or a distorted dome. Representative profiles of the various shape categories are illustrated. Bezels are not illustrated, but their variations in shape are fully described in the catalogue.

ACQUISITION NUMBER. The number by which the seal is registered in the collection of the Museum. The first two digits of the number indicate the year of acquisition. For a chronological listing, showing the growth of the collection, see **Acquisition Numbers**.

MATERIAL. The mineral, stone, or other material composing the seal is cited, followed by mention of the dominant color, where this provides a useful distinction. Other characteristics of individual seals are occasionally mentioned. Of the 224 seals, 167 consist of varieties of quartz, mostly chalcedonic. These are identified by short references using popular names, the usage largely in conformity with that in B.M. The shades of chalcedony observed are somewhat generalized, and minor variations in color (e.g., in carnelian) are not recorded. The category of agate is not further subdivided. For the complete categorization, see **Materials**.

DIMENSIONS. Measurements are in millimeters. The first two numbers indicate the axes of the impression surface – first the width, then the height. For the ellipsoids and domes, the third number indicates the depth of the stone from front (intaglio surface) to back. Within each shape category, seals are listed in descending order of impression width. (The length of a broken seal is estimated and placed in brackets). Bezels are treated somewhat differently. Their internal order is determined by overall shape similarity, and they are divided into three categories of thickness: (i) under three mm., (ii) from three up to four mm., (iii) four mm. or more. There are, of course, some general correlations between bezel shape and thickness.

MOTIF. The motif of each seal is given a coded reference. This consists of an arabic number (indicating the general category of imagery) plus a lower-case letter (particular subject) plus, when required, a second letter (subdivision or manner of depiction). In **Motifs**, a summary of the subjects precedes the detailed description of all the depictions. The full description of a particular seal's imagery should be sought under the appropriate motif number, where it is grouped with the descriptions of the other seals in the same motif category.

STYLE. The motif depictions are placed in one of five classes, each of which is indicated by a capital letter: A. naturalistic, B. conventional, C. devolved, D. outline, E. scratch. For closer definition, see **Index by Style**.

SUBSIDIARY AND DECORATIVE ELEMENTS. Accessory images and decorative elements are given a coded reference with an arabic number plus a lower-case letter in parentheses. These are described in the entries under **Motifs** and listed in the **Index of Subsidiary and Decorative Elements**.

INSCRIPTION. The number or letter found in the entry refers to the listing of all epigraphical features in **Inscriptions**, where the inscriptions are shown in facsimile.

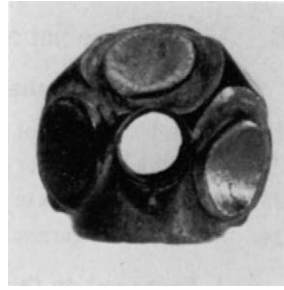
ACQ. NO.	MATERIAL	DIMENSIONS	MOTIF	STYLE	SUBSIDIARY AND DECORATIVE ELEMENTS	INSCRIPTION
I. OVAL BEZEL						
A. Having two flat surfaces.						
1. Having a simple edge: a. unbeveled.						
1.	40.170.159	carnelian	13 × 10	i	10 b B	47
1. Having a simple edge: b. beveled toward the back.						
2.	81.6.316	lapis lazuli	13 × 12	i	3 hb B	b
3.	41.160.636	carnelian	11 × 12	i	9 bb B	1
4.	62.66.14	carnelian	12 dia.	i	3 bc B	2 (a) 2 (b)
5.	81.6.288	carnelian	12 × 11	i	3 gb B	36
6.	81.6.270	jasper (pink)	10 × 13	i	1 be B	4 (b) 11
7.	36.30.27	carnelian	10 × 11	i	2 a C	8 (a)
8.	81.6.276	garnet (almandine)	9 × 10	i	2 i C	6 (b)
1. Having a simple edge: c. beveled toward the front.						
9.	81.6.284	onyx (nicolo)	11 × 12	iii	1 ad A	8 (b) 22
10.	81.6.286	hematite	8 × 9	i	3 jb C	6 (d)
2. Having a faceted edge: a. two equal facets.						
11.	81.6.280	garnet (almandine)	10 × 14	i	1 ad A	7
12.	41.160.755	lapis lazuli	8 × 11	i	1 ad B	i
2. Having a faceted edge: b. two equal facets with beveling added toward the front.						
13.	81.6.266	onyx (nicolo)	7 × 8	ii	1 ac C	4 (a) <i>bis</i>
2. Having a faceted edge: c. two facets, the front one longer.						
14. ¹	81.6.283	chalcedony (translucent)	15 dia.	i	1 ab B	6 (c) 41
15.	81.6.279	carnelian	10 × 13	iii	1 ad B	4 (a) 19
16.	81.6.285	onyx (nicolo)	9 dia.	ii	3 gc B	4 (b)
17.	81.6.264	onyx (nicolo)	8 dia.	ii	1 ad B	44
18.	81.6.265	onyx (sardonyx)	7 × 5	iii	3 ab B	4 (a)

1. Fashioned from a broken dome whose perforation is still visible.

ACQ. NO	MATERIAL	DIMENSIONS	MOTIF	STYLE	SUBSIDIARY AND DECORATIVE ELEMENTS	INSCRIPTION
I. Oval bezel continued						
2. Having a faceted edge: d. two facets, the back one longer.						
19.	81.6.289	carnelian	11×13 ii	1 ad	A 5	
20.	41.160.756	carnelian	12×11 ii	3 ab	B 5	29
					8 (c)	
B. Having one flat and one convex surface.						
1. Engraved on the convex surface: a. without faceting.						
21.	74.51.4425	garnet (almandine)	14×16 iii	1 ad	A	5
22.	81.6.281	garnet (almandine)	12×15 iii	1 ad	A 4 (c)	4
23.	36.30.33	rock crystal	10×12 iii	4 g	C	
24.	81.6.277	garnet (almandine)	11×7 ii	3 ab	B	17
1. Engraved on the convex surface: b. a facet bounding the convex surface.						
25. ²	22.139.41	onyx (sardonyx)	22×30 iii	1 aa	A	
26.	38.40.99	carnelian	11×14 iii	3 de	B 6 (b)	
27.	41.160.754	carnelian	10×8 ii	3 fd	B 4 (c)	
28.	36.30.30	carnelian	8×7 ii	3 ja	D	
29.	36.30.29	carnelian	8 dia. ii	4 e	C	
1. Engraved on the convex surface: c. only slight convexity.						
30.	81.6.278	garnet (almandine)	9×11 i	3 e	A	9
1. Engraved on the convex surface: d. the back slightly concave.						
31.	81.6.271	garnet (almandine)	11 dia. ii	1 ad	A 3	2
					5	
2. Engraved on the flat surface: a. without faceting.						
32.	81.6.282	carnelian	9×12 ii	1 ad	A	6
33.	81.6.272	garnet (almandine)	8×10 ii	3 ab	B	10
2. Engraved on the flat surface: b. a facet bounding the convex surface.						
34.	81.6.273	carnelian	9×10 ii	1 ad	B	3
35.	36.30.28	carnelian	10×8 ii	3 m	D	
2. Perforated along its length.						



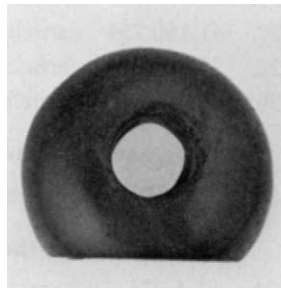
38



41

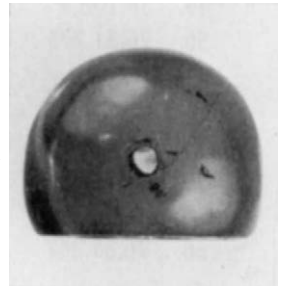


43



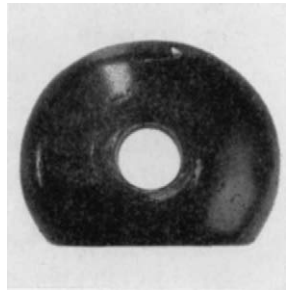
46

ACQ. NO.	MATERIAL	DIMENSIONS	MOTIF	STYLE	SUBSIDIARY AND DECORATIVE ELEMENTS	INSCRIPTION
I. Oval bezel continued						
C. Exact shape unknown.						
36.	81.6.287	carnelian	17×15 ii	1 bc	C	
37.	81.6.267	garnet (almandine)	10 dia. i	9 bb	B	g
II. ELLIPSOID						
A. Having a thick profile.						
1. With rounded back: a. moderate/large perforation. i. carved.						
38.	36.106.4	chalcedony (gray)	13×18×24	3 fe	C	4 (c) 6 (a)
39.	86.11.44	carnelian	15×18×19	7 b	B	
40.	99.22.62	hematite	10×12×14	4 c	D	
41.	41.160.265	hematite	8×8×12	4 ac	C	
1. With rounded back: a. moderate/large perforation. ii. smooth.						
42.	95.15.45	onyx (sardonyx)	22×27×25	4 ba	B	8 (e)
43.	41.160.239	chalcedony (yellow)	18×21×24	3 ka	D	
44.	93.17.42	carnelian	19×13×23	1 cb	D	4 (a) <i>bis</i>
45.	99.22.65	chalcedony (milky)	18×15×23	3 ca	C	
46.	93.17.19	chalcedony (brown)	20×18×23	2 ba	B	2 (b) 4 (b)
47.	74.51.4409	chalcedony (brown)	16×19×23	1 ad	B	15
48.	62.66.20	chalcedony (milky)	19×23×22	3 fe	C	4 (b) 6 (b)
49.	36.106.5	chalcedony (yellow)	13×18×22	9 a	A	6 (b)
50.	26.31.373	chalcedony (brown)	20×21×21	3 fe	C	6 (a)
51.	X.305.1	chalcedony (brown)	20×19×21	2 f	D	
52.	26.31.371	agate	20×20×19	1 da	D	
53.	59.209.38	chalcedony (milky)	14×18×19	3 fe	C	6 (a)
54.	41.160.240	chalcedony (milky)	16×12×18	3 fb	C	4 (a)
55.	41.160.260	agate	14×16×18	9 bb	C	8 (c)
56.	26.31.367	onyx (sardonyx)	14×11×18	3 da	C	2 (b) 4 (a)



ACQ. NO.	MATERIAL	DIMENSIONS	MOTIF	STYLE	SUBSIDIARY AND DECORATIVE ELEMENTS	INSCRIPTION
II. Ellipsoid continued						
57.	93.17.31	chalcedony (milky)	10×13×17	1 be	C	21
58.	74.51.4410	marble (mottled)	16×18×16	9 bb	C	6 (d) 30
59.	32.150.199	chalcedony (brown)	14×15×16	7 ca	D	6 (a)
60.	93.17.40	chalcedony (brown)	13×15×16	2 a	C	4 (a)
				2 e	D	25 e
61.	74.51.4414	hematite	12×11×16	3 ba	C	
62.	41.160.266	marble (mottled)	16×14×15	3 bc	B	28
63.	93.17.33	chalcedony (brown)	13×10×14	3 da	E	
64.	93.17.25	calcite	10×12×14	9 a	B	6 (d)
65.	62.66.19	jasper (bloodstone)	13×12×13	3 fd	B	h
66.	74.51.4415	chalcedony (yellow)	11×9×13	4 j	D	
67.	41.160.245	chalcedony (milky)	8×11×13	3 ac	C	
68.	93.17.132	chalcedony (milky)	8×10×13	1 ad	E	
69.	62.66.24	agate	11×13×12	2 c	A	4 (b) 8 (c)
70.	99.22.48	chalcedony (brown)	10×9×12	3 dc	C	8 (a)
71.	10.130.1398	chalcedony (gray)	9×12×10	9 ba	B	18
72.	62.66.10	carnelian	10×11×[9]	4 ab	C	8 (a)
73.	62.66.1	carnelian	9×10×9	1 ad	C	2 (a)
74.	86.11.47	hematite	6×8×8	9 bb	B	
1. With rounded back: b. small perforation; smooth.						
75.	93.17.6	chalcedony (milky)	22×23×25	2 d	D	
76.	33.175.99	agate	28×28×22	2 d	D	
77.	93.17.8	agate	14×15×21	2 d	D	
78.	36.30.23	chalcedony (yellow)	17×18×17	2 e	D	23/26 34/46
79.	62.66.13	agate	16×13×15	3 dd	B	4 (a) 8 (a)
80.	26.31.360	chalcedony (milky)	16×17×14	9 bb	C	5
81.	36.106.7	chalcedony (gray)	12×14×14	6 c	B	4 (c)
82.	99.22.46	hematite	15×13×[13]	3 fc	C	
83.	74.51.4411	hematite	12×14×13	9 bb	C	6 (d) 8 (a)

93



ACQ. NO.	MATERIAL	DIMENSIONS	MOTIF	STYLE	SUBSIDIARY AND DECORATIVE ELEMENTS	INSCRIPTION
II. <i>Ellipsoid continued</i>						
84.	41.160.247	hematite	14×14×12	3 ha	C	8 (a)
85.	41.160.248	hematite	13×13×12	3 ca	C	
86.	41.160.251	hematite	11×7×11	5 b	D	
87.	62.66.7	jasper (green)	14×14×10	9 bb	B	4 (d) 8 (e)
88.	41.160.264	chalcedony (translucent)	9×8×9	3 dd	B	
89.	41.160.257	carnelian	9×7×9	3 ja	C	

2. With slightly tapered back (and usually some elongation); smooth.

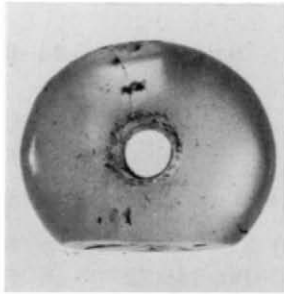
90.	93.17.18	chalcedony (brown)	21×19×25	2 ba	B	
91.	93.17.36	chalcedony (milky)	19×14×22	3 ab	D	
92.	59.209.32	chalcedony (yellow)	18×16×21	3 ka	D	
93.	86.11.43	chalcedony (brown)	17×20×21	1 bd	C	7
94.	99.22.69	chalcedony (brown)	14×20×21	3 hc	C	
95.	99.22.75	chalcedony (brown)	13×17×21	7 cb	D	
96.	59.209.18	chalcedony (white)	17×16×20	3 bc	D	4 (a)
97.	99.22.59	chalcedony (gray)	14×17×19	4 aa	B	
98.	59.209.21	chalcedony (milky)	13×10×19	4 i	C	
99.	74.51.4413	agate	17×12×18	3 db	B	
100.	X.305.3	agate	16×13×18	1 cb	D	4 (a)
101.	59.209.16	chalcedony (brown)	13×14×18	8 ab	D	
102.	41.160.259	agate	18×14×17	3 bc	B	35
103.	59.209.17	carnelian	14×12×17	3 ba	C	
104.	74.51.4419	chalcedony (gray)	13×15×17	1 ad	B	6 (a)
105.	99.22.63	chalcedony (yellow)	12×11×17	4 i	D	2 (b)
106.	86.11.46	chalcedony (gray)	11×15×16	9 bb	B	8 (c)
107.	93.17.20	chalcedony (yellow)	12×12×11	8 ab	D	
108.	99.22.71	rock crystal	9×7×11	3 dc	C	4 (c)
109.	41.160.241	chalcedony (brown)	13×9×10	3 dc	C	8 (a)
110.	41.160.243	chalcedony (milky)	10×9×10	4 h	D	
111.	40.170.160	carnelian	8×12×10	8 aa	D	
112.	59.209.23	carnelian	12×9×9	3 dc	B	2 (b)



113



114



123



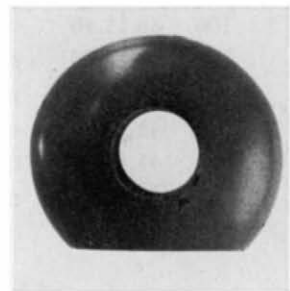
124



131



132

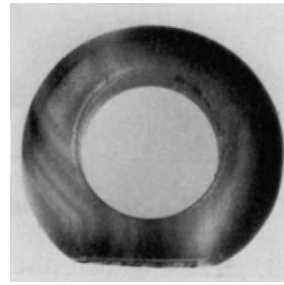


134

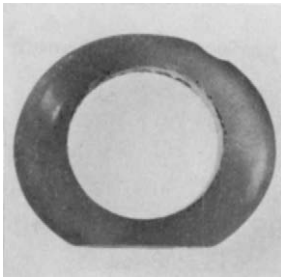
ACQ. NO.	MATERIAL	DIMENSIONS	MOTIF	STYLE	SUBSIDIARY AND DECORATIVE ELEMENTS	INSCRIPTION
II. Ellipsoid continued						
B. Having a thinner profile.						
1. With rounded back and moderate perforation: i. carved.						
113.	99.22.67 chalcedony (translucent)	14×9×16	3 ga	C		
1. With rounded back and moderate perforation: ii. smooth.						
114.	99.22.53 chalcedony (milky)	11×18×21	1 bb	B		
115.	99.22.76 chalcedony (translucent)	13×15×18	9 c	C		16
116.	93.17.50 marble (mottled)	9×12×16	9 ba	C	8 (a)	
117.	99.22.49 carnelian	12×9×15	3 fb	B	2 (b)	8
118.	41.160.242 chalcedony (brown)	9×12×15	8 aa	D		
119.	41.160.263 agate	11×8×13	3 bc	B	4 (b)	
120.	74.51.4416 jasper (green)	8×6×11	4 f	D		
2. With slightly tapered back; smooth.						
121.	99.22.54 agate	12×17×23	1 ba	C	7	
122.	59.209.19 chalcedony (yellow)	9×14×20	1 ba	C		
123.	59.209.20 chalcedony (translucent)	15×9×19	4 j	D		
124.	99.22.55 carnelian	10×16×19	1 ad	C	4 (c)	12
125.	41.160.262 agate	9×13×18	1 da	C	2 (a)	
126.	93.17.21 agate	14×9×16	3 ca	A	4 (b)	
127.	93.17.28 chalcedony (white)	7×9×14	7 ca	D		
128.	99.22.60 carnelian	11×8×13	4 c	D		
129.	41.160.261 agate	9×8×12	3 dd	B	4 (a)	
130.	99.22.50 carnelian	6×9×11	9 ba	B		
3. With thin profile and elongated front: i. carved.						
131.	99.22.68 carnelian	12×9×17	3 ca	C		
132.	62.66.4 carnelian	13×9×15	1 ae	B		13
133.	93.17.26 agate	6×11×12	8 ab	D		
3. With thin profile and elongated front: ii. smooth.						
134.	74.51.4417 carnelian	8×15×18	1 ba	C		



138



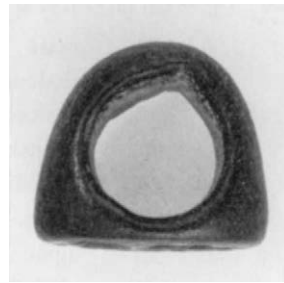
139



140



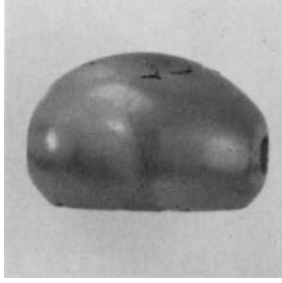
143



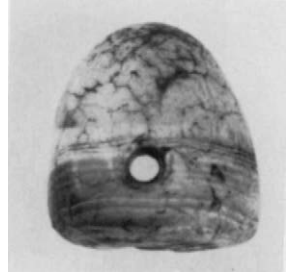
144

ACQ. NO.	MATERIAL	DIMENSIONS	MOTIF	STYLE	SUBSIDIARY AND DECORATIVE ELEMENTS	INSCRIPTION
II. Ellipsoid continued						
135.	36.30.25	carnelian	7×12×16	1 ad	E	
136.	74.51.4418	chalcedony (brown)	7×12×15	5 a	B	
137.	41.160.255	carnelian	9×4×13	5 b	A	
C. Ring-shaped, with a large perforation.						
1. Having a thick profile: i. carved (with tapered back).						
138.	81.6.268	chalcedony (yellow)	16×12×25	7 b	A	20
1. Having a thick profile: ii. smooth (with rounded back).						
139.	36.106.3	agate	12×16×26	8 b	B	4 (a) <i>ter</i> 7
2. Having a thin profile and tapered back.						
140.	41.160.238	chalcedony (milky)	6×15×25	8 aa	D	
141.	40.170.152	chalcedony (translucent)	7×16×[24]	1 ba	C	
142.	36.30.26	carnelian	5×12×[21]	7 cc	B	
3. Variant form in bronze: i. shaped into base and handle.³						
143.	36.106.10	bronze	12×12×11	3 ja	D	
3. Variant in bronze: ii. smooth.						
144.	93.17.16	bronze	17×15×17	2 j	D	4 (b)
145.	74.51.4420	bronze	14×14×15	3 ca	D	
146.	99.22.77	bronze	10×12×13	9 bb	C	
147.	99.22.74	bronze	11×11×13	3 aa	D	8 (a)
148.	99.22.58	bronze	9×10×9	1 ad	E	8 (a)
149.	99.22.51	hematite	12×10×8	3 dc	D	
150.	86.11.49	meteoric iron	11×10×8	3 i	C	

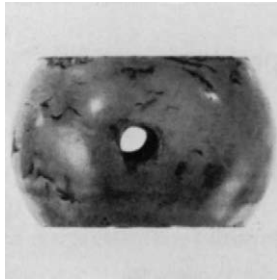
3. The shape is attributable to Parthia and Central Asia but may have continued in the Sasanian period. Cf. *Newell* 599 and *Louvre II*, A.1412. See also B.M. ZT 1 and *Hoernle* p. 38 for other hinged shapes.



151



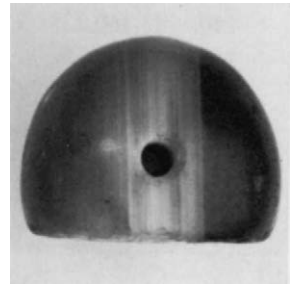
152



153



154

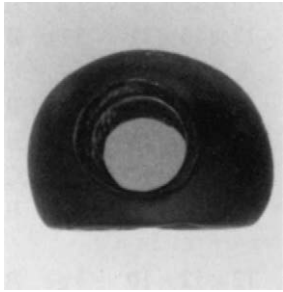


160

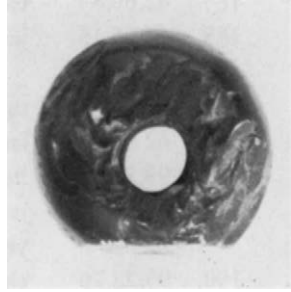
ACQ. NO.	MATERIAL	DIMENSIONS	MOTIFS	STYLE	SUBSIDIARY AND DECORATIVE ELEMENTS	INSCRIPTION
II. Ellipsoid continued						
D. Irregular ellipsoids.						
1. Bead shape; perforated on its longer axis.						
151.	62.66.12 chalcedony (translucent)	11×7×9	5 b	B	8 (a)	
2. Slightly conoid; perforated on its longer axis.						
152.	41.160.267 agate	15×12×14	3 bc	A		24
3. Double seal.						
153.	37.32 jadeite	22×18×20	2 g 2 h	B B		42
III. DOME						
A. Normal: i. carved.						
154.	26.31.368 hematite	10×13×19	1 ca	C		
A. Normal: ii. smooth.						
155.	93.17.5 chalcedony (yellow)	31×32×24	2 d	D		
156.	36.30.34 chalcedony (milky)	23×23×20	2 d	D		
157.	93.17.10 chalcedony (brown)	22×22×20	2 d	D		
158.	93.17.7 chalcedony (milky)	22×18×19	2 d	D		
159.	X.305.2 chalcedony (brown)	21×12×19	2 e	D		
160.	86.11.39 agate	21×21×19	3 fa	A		39
161.	93.17.37 chalcedony (white)	17×19×19	4 bb	D		
162.	93.17.9 chalcedony (brown)	20×21×18	2 d	D		
163.	74.51.4412 chalcedony (gray)	20×20×18	2 d	D		
164.	86.11.40 agate	20×20×18	9 ba	B	4 (a)	45
165.	86.11.45 agate	18×18×17	9 bb	B	6 (b)	d
166.	93.17.11 calcite	18×17×16	3 bc	A		38
167.	36.106.6 chalcedony (yellow)	19×19×15	10 a	B	8 (a)	37
168.	99.22.66 chalcedony (translucent)	16×16×13	3 gc	B		32
169.	30.95.347 hematite	15×15×13	3 dc	D	8 (a)	

ACQ. NO.	MATERIAL	DIMENSIONS	MOTIF	STYLE	SUBSIDIARY AND DECORATIVE ELEMENTS	INSCRIPTION
III. <i>Dome continued</i>						
170.	93.17.27	chalcedony (milky)	10×11×13	7 ca	D	
171. ⁴	99.22.56	carnelian	18×18×12	1 ad	A	6 (c) 14
172.	99.22.61	chalcedony (brown)	14×14×12	4 d	B	
173.	30.95.346	hematite	14×14×12	6 a	B	8 (a)
174.	86.11.41	chalcedony (white)	14×14×12	2 a	B	40
175.	99.22.52	hematite	13×13×12	3 bc	C	8 (a)
176.	93.17.41	hematite	13×13×12	3 dc	D	8 (a)
177.	99.22.78	jasper (bloodstone)	13×13×12	6 a	C	
178.	41.160.258	jasper (bloodstone)	12×11×12	3 cb	B	
179.	62.66.21	chalcedony (milky)	11×11×12	3 gd	A	8 (d)
180.	62.66.23	jasper (bloodstone)	11×11×12	3 cb	B	
181.	93.17.14	chalcedony (brown)	11×10×12	3 bc	B	4 (c)
182.	41.160.256	carnelian	10×10×12	3 ha	B	4 (c) 8 (a)
183.	41.160.244	chalcedony (yellow)	14×12×11	3 ga	B	
184.	62.66.8	carnelian	13×13×11	7 a	A	
185.	62.66.15	jasper (bloodstone)	13×13×11	3 bc	B	4 (b) 5
186.	10.130.1397	meteoric iron	12×12×11	3 bc	B	33
187.	62.66.18	jasper (green)	12×12×11	3 ha	B	a
188.	99.22.47	hematite	11×11×11	3 dd	C	8 (a)
189.	36.106.8	jasper (green, with yellow)	13×13×10	3 bb	B	8 (a)
190.	99.22.70	chalcedony (milky)	12×12×10	3 gc	B	1
191.	62.66.3	agate	10×10×10	1 ad	C	6 (c) 27
192.	62.66.25	jasper (green)	13×13×9	2 bb	C	8 (a)
193.	93.17.38	hematite	13×12×9	1 db	D	
194.	99.22.57	hematite	12×13×9	1 ad	E	8 (a)
195.	62.66.22	jasper (bloodstone)	12×13×9	6 b	B	
196.	62.66.2	agate	12×12×9	1 ad	C	6 (a) 31
197.	41.160.254	carnelian	12×11×9	3 bc	B	4 (c)
198.	59.209.22	hematite	11×11×9	3 bc	C	8 (a)
199.	41.160.250	hematite	11×11×9	3 ca	E	
200.	86.11.42	glass	11×11×9	3 i	B	4 (b)

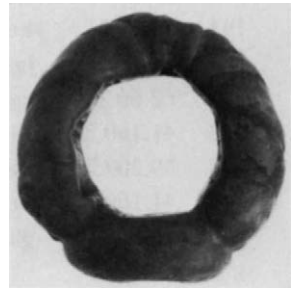
4. Unperforated.



218



223



224

ACQ. NO.		MATERIAL	DIMENSIONS	MOTIF	STYLE	SUBSIDIARY AND DECORATIVE ELEMENTS	INSCRIPTION
III. <i>Dome continued</i>							
201.	93.17.39	hematite	11×11×9	3 l	E		
202.	62.66.5	jasper (bloodstone)	11×11×9	9 bb	B	8 (a)	
203.	93.17.32	chalcedony (yellow)	11×11×9	7 d	A	4 (d)	48
204.	32.150.194	glass	10×10×9	4 f	D		
205.	99.22.73	chalcedony (yellow)	10×9×9	3 aa	C		
206.	62.66.11	carnelian	13×13×8	4 f	B		43
207.	62.66.17	chalcedony (white)	11×11×8	3 aa	C		
208.	40.170.157	hematite	11×11×8	3 da	D		
209.	36.30.32	hematite	11×11×8	3 ja	C	8 (a)	
210.	62.66.6	rock crystal	11×10×8	9 bc	B		
211.	62.66.16	chalcedony (translucent)	10×9×8	3 kb	A		
212.	62.66.9	jasper (green)	9×9×8	4 j	C	8 (a)	
213.	99.22.64	carnelian	10×10×7	3 da	E		
214.	36.30.31	carnelian	8×9×7	9 bb	B	4 (b) 8 (e)	
215.	41.160.246	agate	8×8×7	2 bb	C		
216.	86.11.50	chalcedony (milky)	8×8×7	3 dc	B	2 (a) 4 (b)	
217.	41.160.249	hematite	7×7×6	5 b	C		
B. Flattened bronze dome.							
218.	86.11.48	bronze	13×15×12	3 bd	C	4 (b)	c
219.	41.160.252	bronze	18×18×10	2 f	D	4 (b)	
220.	99.22.72	meteoric iron	16×16×10	3 ha	C		
221.	41.160.253	bronze	12×11×10	3 bc	D		
222.	32.150.201	hematite	11×11×7	9 bb	C	8 (a)	
C. Irregular dome: cylindrical.							
223.	93.17.24	onyx (sardonyx)	8×9×12	9 a	E		
IV. CARVED RING							
224.	25.80	marble (alabaster)	24×26×36	1 ad	D		f

Acquisition Numbers

The seals are listed here in the order of their acquisition by the Museum from 1874 to 1962, the year indicated by the first two digits of the number. The first three seals were transferred to the Museum's Ancient Near East department in 1950; the date of their original acquisition is unknown. Each number is followed by the seal's present catalogue number and motif number.

	CAT. NO.	MOTIF		CAT. NO.	MOTIF
X.305.1	51	2 f	81.6.278	30	3 e
X.305.2	159	2 e	81.6.279	15	1 ad
X.305.3	100	1 cb	81.6.280	11	1 ad
74.51.4409	47	1 ad	81.6.281	22	1 ad
74.51.4410	58	9 bb	81.6.282	32	1 ad
74.51.4411	83	9 bb	81.6.283	14	1 ab
74.51.4412	163	2 d	81.6.284	9	1 ad
74.51.4413	99	3 db	81.6.285	16	3 gc
74.51.4414	61	3 ba	81.6.286	10	3 jb
74.51.4415	66	4 j	81.6.287	36	1 bc
74.51.4416	120	4 f	81.6.288	5	3 gb
74.51.4417	134	1 ba	81.6.289	19	1 ad
74.51.4418	136	5 a	81.6.316	2	3 hb
74.51.4419	104	1 ad	86.11.39	160	3 fa
74.51.4420	145	3 ca	86.11.40	164	9 ba
74.51.4425	21	1 ad	86.11.41	174	2 a
81.6.264	17	1 ad	86.11.42	200	3 i
81.6.265	18	3 ab	86.11.43	93	1 bd
81.6.266	13	1 ac	86.11.44	39	7 b
81.6.267	37	9 bb	86.11.45	165	9 bb
81.6.268	138	7 b	86.11.46	106	9 bb
81.6.270	6	1 be	86.11.47	74	9 bb
81.6.271	31	1 ad	86.11.48	218	3 bd
81.6.272	33	3 ab	86.11.49	150	3 i
81.6.273	34	1 ad	86.11.50	216	3 dc
81.6.276	8	2 i	93.17.5	155	2 d
81.6.277	24	3 ab	93.17.6	75	2 d

	CAT. NO.	MOTIF		CAT. NO.	MOTIF
93.17.7	158	2 d	99.22.55	124	1 ad
93.17.8	77	2 d	99.22.56	171	1 ad
93.17.9	162	2 d	99.22.57	194	1 ad
93.17.10	157	2 d	99.22.58	148	1 ad
93.17.11	166	3 bc	99.22.59	97	4 aa
93.17.14	181	3 bc	99.22.60	128	4 c
93.17.16	144	2 j	99.22.61	172	4 d
93.17.18	90	2 ba	99.22.62	40	4 c
93.17.19	46	2 ba	99.22.63	105	4 i
93.17.20	107	8 ab	99.22.64	213	3 da
93.17.21	126	3 ca	99.22.65	45	3 ca
93.17.24	223	9 a	99.22.66	168	3 gc
93.17.25	64	9 a	99.22.67	113	3 ga
93.17.26	133	8 ab	99.22.68	131	3 ca
93.17.27	170	7 ca	99.22.69	94	3 hc
93.17.28	127	7 ca	99.22.70	190	3 gc
93.17.31	57	1 be	99.22.71	108	3 dc
93.17.32	203	7 d	99.22.72	220	3 ha
93.17.33	63	3 da	99.22.73	205	3 aa
93.17.36	91	3 ab	99.22.74	147	3 aa
93.17.37	161	4 bb	99.22.75	95	7 cb
93.17.38	193	1 db	99.22.76	115	9 c
93.17.39	201	3 l	99.22.77	146	9 bb
93.17.40	60	2 a	99.22.78	177	6 a
		2 e	10.130.1397	186	3 bc
93.17.41	176	3 dc	10.130.1398	71	9 ba
93.17.42	44	1 cb	22.139.41	25	1 aa
93.17.50	116	9 ba	25.80	224	1 ad
93.17.132	68	1 ad	26.31.360	80	9 bb
95.15.45	42	4 ba	26.31.367	56	3 da
99.22.46	82	3 fc	26.31.368	154	1 ca
99.22.47	188	3 dd	26.31.371	52	1 da
99.22.48	70	3 dc	26.31.373	50	3 fe
99.22.49	117	3 fb	30.95.346	173	6 a
99.22.50	130	9 ba	30.95.347	169	3 dc
99.22.51	149	3 dc	32.150.194	204	4 f
99.22.52	175	3 bc	32.150.199	59	7 ca
99.22.53	114	1 bb	32.150.201	222	9 bb
99.22.54	121	1 ba	33.175.99	76	2 d

	CAT. NO.	MOTIF		CAT. NO.	MOTIF
36.30.23	78	2 e	41.160.252	219	2 f
36.30.25	135	1 ad	41.160.253	221	3 bc
36.30.26	142	7 cc	41.160.254	197	3 bc
36.30.27	7	2 a	41.160.255	137	5 b
36.30.28	35	3 m	41.160.256	182	3 ha
36.30.29	29	4 e	41.160.257	89	3 ja
36.30.30	28	3 ja	41.160.258	178	3 cb
36.30.31	214	9 bb	41.160.259	102	3 bc
36.30.32	209	3 ja	41.160.260	55	9 bb
36.30.33	23	4 g	41.160.261	129	3 dd
36.30.34	156	2 d	41.160.262	125	1 da
36.106.3	139	8 b	41.160.263	119	3 bc
36.106.4	38	3 fe	41.160.264	88	3 dd
36.106.5	49	9 a	41.160.265	41	4 ac
36.106.6	167	10 a	41.160.266	62	3 bc
36.106.7	81	6 c	41.160.267	152	3 bc
36.106.8	189	3 bb	41.160.636	3	9 bb
36.106.10	143	3 ja	41.160.754	27	3 fd
37.32	153	2 g	41.160.755	12	1 ad
		2 h	41.160.756	20	3 ab
38.40.99	26	3 de	59.209.16	101	8 ab
40.170.152	141	1 ba	59.209.17	103	3 ba
40.170.157	208	3 da	59.209.18	96	3 bc
40.170.159	1	10 b	59.209.19	122	1 ba
40.170.160	111	8 aa	59.209.20	123	4 j
41.160.238	140	8 aa	59.209.21	98	4 i
41.160.239	43	3 ka	59.209.22	198	3 bc
41.160.240	54	3 fb	59.209.23	112	3 dc
41.160.241	109	3 dc	59.209.32	92	3 ka
41.160.242	118	8 aa	59.209.38	53	3 fe
41.160.243	110	4 h	62.66.1	73	1 ad
41.160.244	183	3 ga	62.66.2	196	1 ad
41.160.245	67	3 ac	62.66.3	191	1 ad
41.160.246	215	2 bb	62.66.4	132	1 ae
41.160.247	84	3 ha	62.66.5	202	9 bb
41.160.248	85	3 ca	62.66.6	210	9 bc
41.160.249	217	5 b	62.66.7	87	9 bb
41.160.250	199	3 ca	62.66.8	184	7 a
41.160.251	86	5 b	62.66.9	212	4 j

	CAT. NO.	MOTIF		CAT. NO.	MOTIF
62.66.10	72	4 ab	62.66.18	187	3 ha
62.66.11	206	4 f	62.66.19	65	3 fd
62.66.12	151	5 b	62.66.20	48	3 fe
62.66.13	79	3 dd	62.66.21	179	3 gd
62.66.14	4	3 bc	62.66.22	195	6 b
62.66.15	185	3 bc	62.66.23	180	3 cb
62.66.16	211	3 kb	62.66.24	69	2 c
62.66.17	207	3 aa	62.66.25	192	2 bb

Materials

A lore of minerals and stones is attributed to Zoroaster and to the mages by classical writers,¹ but it is difficult to judge whether ancient Iranian folklore actually provided any basis for their assertions. It is likely that, by Sasanian times, a well-defined body of beliefs was current in Iran regarding the classification and the virtues of minerals. Such beliefs, if not indigenous, could easily have been borrowed from Mesopotamia or, in the course of the international traffic in minerals, from farther abroad. A strong impact of Indian ideas is likely; for India both had trade relations with Sasanian Iran and exercised important intellectual influence on it in the areas of science and quasi-science.² The Sanskrit lapidary texts point to a customary trade in precious stones with the Persian Gulf; and Iran (or, more specifically, its province of Asuristān, i.e. Babylonia) may well have handled parts of the transit trade in precious stones between the East and the Roman empire. The import duty list cited in the *Corpus Juris Civilis*, in any case, includes specifically Iranian goods, as well as Indian goods and a variety of precious and semiprecious stones.³ The influence of Indian science also reached into Central Asia, and the published Buddhist Sogdian lapidary text is a further manifestation of it.⁴

Contemporary evidence is lacking in regard to specific Sasanian notions in the area of mineralogy. The encyclopedic *Bundahišn* ("Original Creation") provides no indications; and most references to minerals (chiefly precious stones), scattered through Middle Persian literature, are routine in nature. A systematic, if simple, lapidary text occurs only in the *Pahlavi Rivayat accompanying the Dādistān-ī Dīnīk*, which postdates the Sasanian period by several centuries.⁵ It defines mineral types by color (with occasional reference to luster) and then describes the magical functions for which each mineral is suitable. The system is rudimentary, when the Sogdian text is compared; but the same empiricism seems to underlie

1. The texts are collected in J. Bidez and F. Cumont, *Les Mages Hellénisés* (Paris, 1938) II, pp. 197–206.

2. For the latter point, see David Pingree, "Astronomy and Astrology in India and Iran," *Isis* 54 (1963) pp. 229–46; "Indian Influence on Sasanian and Early Islamic Astronomy and Astrology," *Journal of Oriental Research*, Madras, 34–35 (1964–66) pp. 118–26.

3. See Louis Finot, *Les Lapidaires Indiens* (Paris, 1896); *Corpus Juris Civilis*

Lib. IV, tit. IV, pars. 6, 16 (ed. A. and M. Kriegel [Leipzig, 1843] I, p. 695). The stones listed are: *onyx Arabicus*, . . . *lapis univversus*, *margarita*, *sardonyx*, *ceraunium*, *hyacinthus*, *smaragdus*, *adamas*, *saphirinus*, *callainus*, *beryllus*.

4. E. Benveniste, *Textes Sogdiens* (Paris, 1940) pp. 59–73.

5. Ed. by E. B. N. Dhabhar (Bombay, 1913) pp. 202–06; translated by P. de Menasce, "Un lapidaire pehlevi," *Anthropos* 37–40 (1942–45) pp. 180–85.

both. Since the *rivāyat* (“tradition”) assembles a considerable amount of traditional Zoroastrian belief, it is quite possible that the lapidary text preserves genuine Sasanian attitudes, although greatly abbreviating the relevant lore.

The *Pahlavi Rivāyat* chapter 64 is titled “The signs of cut stones,⁶ which, in use, [are] well-healing knives which keep the heavens and mankind happier and more tranquil” (*nišān ī muhragihā ī pad kār kār ī nek-bēšāz kē āsmān ud mardōm hramtar ud rāmištar dārēd*, p. 202.3–5). The stones are divided into only six categories of color: (1) “shining” (*spēz*), i.e., white, and probably translucent as well; (2) black, (*siyāh*); (3) yellow (*zard*); (4) red (*suxr*); (5) dark blue (*xašēn*); (6) “sky-color”, (*āsmān-gōn*), i.e., lighter blue. One may assign most of the seals listed below to one of the first four categories (including brown chalcedony with yellow, almandine and hematite with red, and green jasper perhaps with yellow); agate would be problematical. This done, the magical efficacies immanent in each seal stone could be derived by consulting the text. It should be noted, however, that only one strong correlation between a material/color and a motif is noticeable in the present corpus. That is the use of brown chalcedony for motif 2 d (Gayōmard with dog) and 2 e (group scene with Gayōmard). But such a correlation may exist because of the availability of materials, especially since there is a preference for large seals in rendering the Gayōmard motif. Therefore, so far as one can presently judge, the motif to be executed on a stone was not selected particularly to reinforce the power within that stone.

The *Pahlavi Rivāyat* refers to the stones’ enhancing the harmony of the heavens as well as mankind. It thus fits this aspect of “natural magic” within the unific view of the universe characteristic of Sasanian and later Zoroastrianism, with its macrocosm-microcosm correspondences and awareness of astrological sympathies in the elements. The heavens, it may be noted, supply an important point of mineral symbolism in Iranian tradition. The dome of the sky, described generally as stone, is more precisely identified as crystal (*ābgēnag*) or diamond (*almās*).⁷

The materials represented in the collection can be divided into five groups: Quartz, Other silicates, Carbonates, Iron compounds, and Artificial materials. Following the name of each mineral is, in parentheses, the number of seals in that category and then the catalogue numbers.

6. The term used throughout the text is *muhrag*, “bead” and “gaming piece.” Dhabhar prefers, in the chapter heading, the variant reading *muhrihā*, “seal-stones.” This is more likely to be a simple scribal error, although seals and gaming pieces were apparently vaguely similar in shape. A probable gaming piece in the Metropolitan Museum (an agate stone, acq. no. 36.30.5, found at Qasr-i Abu Nasr) rises to a rather pointed back and is, of course, unperforated. The Sogdian text uses the term *sang*, “(natural)

stone,” and is clearly more oriented toward the observation of minerals on the ground.

7. For an extensive discussion of this point, H. W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books* (Oxford, 1943), pp. 120–48, especially 129 ff. Cf. the *Šāhnāma*’s version: “The blue sphere is of red ruby – not of wind and water, not of dust and smoke” (*Šāhnāma*, I, p. 12.77).

I. Quartz (silicon dioxide). By far the largest group. The macrocrystalline form is attested only by the few examples of rock crystal. The others are varieties of microcrystalline chalcedonic quartz. In this index, as in the **Catalogue**, specific color variations of chalcedony are listed by their popular names.

	TOTAL	CATALOGUE NUMBERS
rock crystal	(3):	23, 108, 210
chalcedony (translucent)	(9):	14, 88, 113, 115, 123, 141, 151, 168, 211
(milky)	(20):	45, 48, 53, 54, 57, 67, 68, 75, 80, 91, 98, 110, 114, 140, 156, 158, 170, 179, 190, 216
(gray)	(7):	38, 71, 81, 97, 104, 106, 163
(white)	(5):	96, 127, 161, 174, 207
(yellow)	(14):	43, 49, 66, 78, 92, 105, 107, 122, 138, 155, 167, 183, 203, 205
(brown)	(21):	46, 47, 50, 51, 59, 60, 63, 70, 90, 93, 94, 95, 101, 109, 118, 136, 157, 159, 162, 172, 181
carnelian	(41):	1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 15, 19, 20, 26, 27, 28, 29, 32, 34, 35, 36, 39, 44, 72, 73, 89, 103, 111, 112, 117, 124, 128, 130, 131, 132, 134, 135, 137, 142, 171, 182, 184, 197, 206, 213, 214
jasper (pink)	(1):	6
(green)	(6):	87, 120, 187, 189, 192, 212
(bloodstone)	(7):	65, 177, 178, 180, 185, 195, 202
onyx (sardonyx)	(5):	18, 25, 42, 56, 223
(nicolo)	(4):	9, 13, 16, 17
agate	(23):	52, 55, 69, 76, 77, 79, 99, 100, 102, 119, 121, 125, 126, 129, 133, 139, 152, 160, 164, 165, 191, 196, 215

II. Other silicates. Of these, almandine garnet was a fairly popular material, lapis lazuli somewhat less so.

	TOTAL	CATALOGUE NUMBERS
garnet (almandine)	(9):	8, 11, 21, 22, 24, 30, 31, 33, 37
lapis lazuli	(2):	2, 12
jadeite	(1):	153

III. Carbonates. This group is represented only by calcite and by the associated metamorphic rock, marble.

	TOTAL	CATALOGUE NUMBERS
calcite	(2):	64, 166
marble (mottled)	(3):	58, 62, 116
(alabaster)	(1):	224

IV. Iron compounds.

	TOTAL	CATALOGUE NUMBERS
hematite (ferric oxide)	(26):	10, 40, 41, 61, 74, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 149, 154, 169, 173, 175, 176, 188, 193, 194, 198, 199, 201, 208, 209, 217, 222
meteoric iron	(3):	150, 185, 220

V. Artificial materials.

	TOTAL	CATALOGUE NUMBERS
bronze	(9):	143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 218, 219, 221
glass	(2):	200, 204

Motifs

The preliminary Summary indicates the organization of the rest, in which each of the seal depictions is described in detail. Each category may be further subdivided, by the addition of a second letter, to classify variations in the motif.

SUMMARY

1. Human Figures from Life

- 1 a single male figure
- 1 b single female figure
- 1 c a male and a female figure
- 1 d ritual scene with male figure(s)

2. Mythical or Heroic Figures

- 2 a putto
- 2 b lamassu
- 2 c gryllus (human-headed cock)
- 2 d Gayōmard, usually with dog
- 2 e group scene with Gayōmard
- 2 f hunting or combat scene between man and animal
- 2 g Frēdōn
- 2 h she-wolf with infant
- 2 i “tamer of lions”
- 2 j male figure with winged horse

3. Animals: Quadrupeds

- | | |
|--------------|-------------------------|
| 3 a bull | 3 h lion attacking prey |
| 3 b horse | 3 i goat |
| 3 c Sēn bird | 3 j antelope |
| 3 d stag | 3 k bear |
| 3 e elephant | 3 l dog |
| 3 f ram | 3 m hare |
| 3 g lion | |

4. Animals: Birds

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| 4 a eagle | 4 f duck |
| 4 b eagle attacking prey | 4 g crane |
| 4 c cock | 4 h pigeon |
| 4 d peacock | 4 i crow |
| 4 e pheasant | 4 j other birds |

1. HUMAN FIGURES FROM LIFE

1 aa. Male figure: full-length portrait.



25 (style A). A noble stands with his body in frontal view, his head in right profile. His cap, the *kulāf*, indicates high rank. It is ridged along the top and probably studded with pearls (indicated by six scattered dots); small fillet ribbons float behind. He is bearded and wears his hair in a style better illustrated on nos. 11 and 21 (motif 1 ad): he has a two-bead earring. The long, belted coat is shown rather sketchily, as is the cape over the shoulders and its fastenings on the chest. The sword is worn on the right hip; cf. the Sasanian reliefs, where the right is customary. The long trousers are fastened at the shoes with ribbons. The right hand is intended as grasping the sword hilt; in the left he raises a long-stemmed flower with two leaves.

The rarity of a full-portrait seal should indicate that the owner of this one was an important personage. He may well have been a member of the royal clan from the period of Šāpūr II (A.D. 309–79). The stone, which is perforated, compares in size and shape with the seal of Wahrām IV (A.D. 388–99, B.M. BC 1) although not in quality of execution. Wahrām's seal transfers to the stone a monumental victory motif. The noble's pose on this seal and on B.M. BC 4 also has a monumental parallel. He is almost certainly holding a tulip and makes with it the gesture of good will and sincerity (see below, 7 b). This gesture was standardized as a symbol; with or without the flower, the hand forms a clear seal motif (9 a; cf., with the flower, B.M. CH 3, *QAN* D.48). On Wahrām II's Barm-i Dilak relief, a noble makes this same gesture with a tulip toward the queen (Hinz, pl. 136). Because of the general nature of the gesture, the noble on the Metropolitan's seal need not be visualized as specifically at court. By contrast, the Mtskheta silver bowl (Lukonin 1969, pl. 123) depicts the *bidaxš* of Georgia holding a flower in his right hand and with it making the gesture of *namāz*, i.e., reverence directed toward the gods (*yazdān*) or toward the earthly god (*bay*), the king. The latter is more probably intended here. Although the *namāz* gesture is frequent on Sasanian

reliefs, the inclusion of the flower is innovative. Under 1 ba, further implications of the flower are observed.

Fourth century.

Publications: *MMAB* 20, 1925, p. 84, fig. 14. Osten, fig. 123. V. E. Crawford et al., *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Guide to the Collections, Ancient Near Eastern Art* (New York, 1966), p. 37. Göbl 1973, 2a².

1 ab. Male bust: frontal.

14 (style B). Inscription 41. The mage wears a *kulāf* edged with pearls or jewels; its ribbons float behind to either side. He is bearded and wears his hair gathered into bunches of curls. He wears a pearl or jewel necklace. A few lines at the shoulders suggest drapery. The bust terminates in a base of stylized palmettes.

Frontality in Sasanian art is more usual for divine or royal figures than for the nobility. This seal compares especially with B.M. AF 3; the figure depicted there is likewise a mage, as may be read in the enlarged photograph in Ghirshman 1962, fig. 294. *QAN* D.101 may also show a mage. Frontal images identified as mages are found without the *kulāf* (Yale 75; *QAN* D.89 and perhaps D.420). Similar seals, inscribed but lacking the term mage, are B.M. AF 2; *QAN* D.134; *Gorelick* 60; *Foroughi*, pl. XL/82–83; Göbl 1973, 7b. These personages may be mages nevertheless.

Publications: King 1860, p. xlv. King 1872, II, pl. iv/10. *MMA Hand-Book No. 9*, p. 31, no. 6. King 1885, pl. ix/3. Osten, fig. 117.

1 ac. Male bust: three-quarter view.

13 (style C). The face is beardless; the hair is bound with a fillet in a common Sasanian style (see 1 ad). The bust is slightly modeled into two lobes. The drapery is shown in the manner most frequently used, with horizontal folds at the shoulders and vertical ones falling over the chest. Above either shoulder is a four-pointed sun-star.

The three-quarter orientation is unusual; cf. *QAN* D.90. There is a certain ambiguity, perhaps sometimes intentional, in the four-pointed star; since it may also be interpreted as a Christian cross (see 8 b). For overt Christian symbolism, however, the cross potent is used



(see B.M. BE 2, NA 1; Berlin 1587, 1603; cf. a variant form on Leningrad 197 and a Latin cross on Göbl 1973, 102a). For a similar arrangement of bust and four-pointed stars, see Berlin 274.

Publications: *MMA Hand-Book No. 9*, p. 32, no. 12. Osten, fig. 133.

1 ad. Male bust: right profile.

191 (style C). Inscription 27. The figure wears a *kulāf* with edging and a single-bead earring. Drapery is not indicated. The bust terminates in a palmette-row base. The hair is depicted somewhat unclearly; but comparison with seals of similar style (Louvre I, D.263–264; *Foroughi*, pl. XLIII/106, 108) suggests that the arrangement of long parallel locks (as in 1 aa/14) is intended.

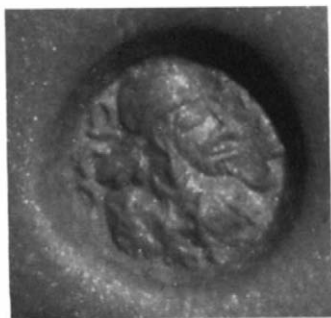
Fifth century.

11 (style A). Inscription 7. The face is bearded. The top hair is arranged in loose curls, the back hair wound in parallel locks. The bust is modeled into four lobes, clearly distinguishing shoulders and breasts. It is unusual, considering the hair style, that the right ear is not shown.

The arrangement of the hair, modeling of the bust, and fairly naturalistic style observed here are also found on B.M. AA 4; Leningrad 14; and *Foroughi*, pl. XLI/90. These are usually features of the third and fourth centuries. A tendency toward similar modeling appears on the Kushano-Sasanian copper issues (*CII Kushan* pls. iv, v, ix, x) and occasionally on Sasanian silver *drahms* (Göbl 1968, nos. 41, 49). It is also apparent on a silver bowl with portrait medallion in the Cincinnati Art Museum (*Sas. Silver* no. 11). The hair style, at least in regard to the parallel locks, is amply attested on the Sasanian reliefs and on seals as late as the sixth century (the *QAN* bullae, *passim*). Other seal parallels for the entire hair arrangement are Louvre I, D.265; Leningrad 7; Geneva 99; Mordtmann, pl. 1/15. These are somewhat later in date than the Metropolitan's seal, as is the seal of the lady Sāsānduxt, which depicts a similar hair style (*Foroughi*, pl. XLV/127).

About A.D. 300.

Publications: King 1872, II, pl. v/59. *MMA Hand-Book No. 9*, p. 32, no. 7. King 1885, p. 372, no. 59. Osten, fig. 119.



21 (style A). Inscription 5. Similar to the preceding, but the ear is visible and ornamented with a single-bead earring. The bust is modeled into four, and the drapery is marked vertically. A notable early Sasanian feature is the “layered” representation of the long beard. Cf. B.M. AA 3–4; Leningrad 1; Louvre I, D.266; Berlin 989, 998; Mordtmann, pl. II/155. The portrait dish in Cincinnati, a bowl in the MMA (no. 1970.5), a bowl in the Freer Gallery (no. 57.20), and the Mtskheta bowl and Zargveshi cup all illustrate this feature (see Harper 1974). Cf. several figures on Wahrām II’s relief at Naqsh-e Rostam (Hinz, pls. 122, 125, 126).

Late third century.

Publications: *Atlas*, III, pl. xxxII/6. *Handbook*, p. 449. Osten, fig. 122.



31 (style A). Inscription 2. Male bust with short hair, dressed entirely as curls. He wears a single-bead earring, and his beard is layered. The bust is broken but appears to be scalloped. Drapery folds are indicated on the left shoulder. Above the shoulder appears a triskele within a circle. On the lower left edge, there appears what is apparently part of a personal device; the rest is broken off.

This same style of loose curls without a fillet and short on the back of the head is illustrated by B.M. AA 5 and *Foroughi*, pl. XLIV/121. They approach a manner of representing curls that appears occasionally on Roman coins (e.g., the portrait of Lucius Verus, d. A.D. 169) and seals (Richter, no. 266). The B.M. seal portrait, and apparently the *Foroughi* one, is clean-shaven (for the proper name on it, see MMA no. 9/inscription 22). But in the present portrait, the style is combined with a beard of usual fashion. The following seal shows a similar hair style, and the next has the more common and technically simpler way of representing curls on Sasanian seals.

Late third century.

Publications: *MMA Hand-Book No. 9*, p. 32, no. 10. Osten, fig. 126.



34 (style B). Inscription 3. Male bust with clean-shaven face; the hair is dressed in curls that are tighter than in the preceding portrait. A single-bead earring is worn, as well as a strung necklace of jewels or pearls. The bust is marked with a threefold division into shoulders and chest. The garment is indicated by heavy horizontal striations.



This portrait and B.M. AA 5 may be compared with *Foroughi*, pl. XL/82–83, which show frontal views of beardless men with hair in tight curls. Other beardless portraits include Geneva 99, Berlin 1039, 1041, 1048. (Cf. the portrait of a non-Iranian, Göbl 1973, 7a, bottom.)

Early fourth century.

Publications: *MMA Hand-Book No. 9*, p. 32, no. 8. Osten, fig. 118.



22 (style A). Inscription 4. Male bust with bearded face. The hair is in tight curls, each represented by a simple drill hole; it is short in back. A single-bead earring and a strung necklace of pendent ornaments is worn. The bust is cut in a V-shape and rests in a base of stylized wings, which are tied with ribbons. To the right of the head is a six-pointed sun-star, to the left a lunar crescent.

This simplified technique for indicating curls is already displayed on the coinage of the Arsacid king Osroes (A.D. early second century). Cf. generally, in stone, the image of Xwasak, satrap of Susa, which dates to A.D. 215 (Ghirshman 1962, p. 56). The same depiction of the hair occurs on the seals B.M. AD 3, and 7; Berlin 1051–52; *Foroughi*, pls. XLI/93, XLIII/110, XLIV/115, 120; *QAN* D.127. The type of necklace worn is an occasional alternative to the more common form, which is a string of round bead shapes; cf. B.M. AA 7, AB 4, 6, 8; Berlin 1000.

About mid-fourth century.

Publications: King 1872, II, pl. iv/1. *MMA Hand-Book No. 9*, p. 31, no. 4. King 1885, pl. VIII/2. Osten, fig. 124.



17 (style B). Inscription 44. Male bust with bearded face, hair in tight curls. The emphatic division of the bust into two lobes, each defined by drapery folds, is unusual; a somewhat similar treatment occurs on *Foroughi*, pl. XLV/123.

Sixth century.

Publications: *MMA Hand-Book No. 9*, p. 32, no. 11. Osten, fig. 129.



171 (style A). Inscription 14. Male bust with bearded face. The hair is in tight curls with a bunch gathered at the back of the head. A single-bead earring and a strung bead necklace is worn. No drapery is indicated; the bust has a base of stylized palmettes.

This depiction of the hair is familiar from *drahms* of the kings Wahrām IV and Yazdigard I (A.D. 388–421, Göbl 1968, nos. 143, 151–52). On seals, cf. B.M. AF 6, *QAN* D.105, and Mordtmann, pl. II/12. Similar, but with variant representations of the back hair, are *Foroughi*, pls. XLI/88, XLV/123.

Fifth century.

Publication: Osten, fig. 114.

32 (style A). Inscription 6. Male bust with bearded face; the beard has vertical striations only. The hair is bound, so that it is straight on top but forms a fringe of curls about the face; a bunch of curls is gathered in back. A two-bead earring is worn. The bust is modeled in two halves; drapery folds are horizontal on the shoulders but become vertical on the chest.

The depictions of hair on the preceding profiles may be summarized (and the paradigm completed) as follows. The vertical column indicates the top hair, the horizontal one the back:

	SHORT	PARALLEL LOCKS	BUNCH
loose curls	31, 34	11, 21	<i>Foroughi</i> , pl. XLI/88
tight curls	22, 17	Leningrad 9	171

The present seal, like B.M. AA 6, shows an early example of a much more common hair style, observable in all seal catalogues *passim*. Berlin 1000 and 1007 are probably equally old. The bust on the Cincinnati silver dish (*Sas. Silver*, no. 11) displays the same style.

Early fourth century.

Publications: Apparently Mordtmann, pl. I/114. King 1872, II, second plate series II/24. *MMA Hand-Book* No. 9, p. 32, no. 9. King 1885, p. 360, no. 24. Osten fig. 116. M. Sprengling, "Iranica," *JNES* 12 (1953), pp. 189–90.

15 (style B). Inscription 19. Male bust with bearded face; hair the same as the preceding. A two-bead earring is worn. The bust is clearly defined in four parts, with horizontal folds at the shoulders, vertical ones on the chest. A four-pointed sun-star precedes the inscription. Rather similar depictions are *Foroughi*, pl. XLI/89, 95.





Late fourth century.

Publications: *MMA Hand-Book No. 9*, p. 32, no. 13. Osten, fig. 115.

124 (style C). Inscription 12. Male bust with bearded face. The hair is bound with a fillet; it is straight on top and a vague mass around the face, without bunching in back. A single-bead earring is worn. The bust is undifferentiated, having uniform vertical striations. The inscription is followed by a five-pointed sun-star and a crescent. This hair style, a slight simplification of the preceding one, is equally common.

Fifth century.

Publication: Osten, fig. 125.



47 (style B). Inscription 15. Male bust with bearded face. The hair is bound and represented as straight. The drapery falls in horizontal folds from the shoulders, which are interrupted by the vertical fold over the chest. This rather schematized manner of portraiture is common; Leningrad 31 and Geneva 103 are close parallels.

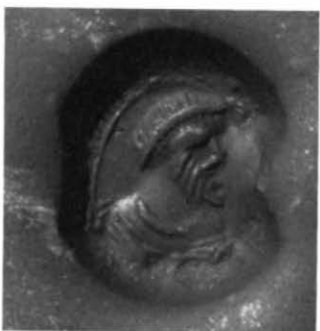
Early fifth century.

Publications: *Handbook*, p. 449. Osten, fig. 121.



104 (style B). Male bust with bearded face. Hair is bound, straight on top, vaguely curled about the face. Single-bead earring. The slight bust is cut to a point and rests within a wing base. The wings are of conventional form, in contrast to the stylization of no. 22 above. Primary and secondary feathers are indicated by long, lengthwise striations; the coverts are shown by short strokes crosswise. The wings rest on a small base stroke.

Publications: *Handbook*, p. 449. Osten, fig. 120.



73 (style C). Male bust with bearded face and straight, bound hair. The bust is undifferentiated, with horizontal drapery folds. Behind the bust, is a single leafy branch. Although the other side of the seal is broken, there is no indication, at the top, of a second branch. Such converging sprays are a familiar border device; cf. B.M. AF 1-2 and see **Index of Subsidiary and Decorative Elements**, 7 (e). A single branch is more common with animal motifs but apparently may occur with a bust when space is limited; cf. Berlin 1041.

196 (style C). Inscription 31. Male bust with bearded face. Hair is apparently bound and is represented in a ripple pattern. Single-bead earring. The bust merges with a rudimentary wing base. Vestige of a ribbon below, right.

Late fifth century.



224 (style D). Inscription f. Male bust, seemingly beardless but possibly with a mustache. The hair seems bound. Some form of headdress is worn, with a crest of ribbons visible at the top. A drill hole on the neck is too low to suggest an earring. A necklace with a single pendant is worn, below which appears a clasp or ornament. The bust is poorly defined, but the shoulders are distinguished as round masses.

Facial characteristics and headdress suggest a comparison with the Chionite-Hephthalite seals. See *CII Kushan*, pl. II/3. The arrangement of the motif, however, is quite in the Sasanian style. The authenticity of the seal is not secure, and its anomalous form (a large ring poorly carved after a conventional Sasanian fashion, see **Catalogue**, shape IV) is a further complication.

Fifth to sixth century, if genuine.



148 (style E). A male bust with bearded face and bound, straight hair. The drapery of the bust is crudely represented after the fashion of no. 47, above. Border of elongated beads. The scratch style of this and the following three seals is amply paralleled; see the B.M. AG series; Louvre II, A.1442-51.

Publication: Osten, fig. 17.



194 (style E). Same as the preceding. Border of elongated beads.

Publication: Osten, fig. 18.



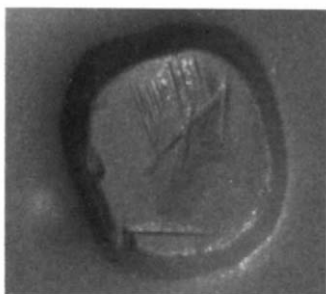
135 (style E). Same as the preceding. A find from Qasr-i Abu Nasr.

Publication: *QAN*, p. 39 and pl. iv/15.

194



135



68



19



9

68 (style E). Same as the preceding; bust is reduced to a mere base line.

19 (style A). Male bust with bearded face. The hair in parallel locks protrudes from under a conical, layered cap. The wide-collared garment is divided into uniform vertical strips. Four dots occur in front of the eye; two intersected parallel lines are above the shoulder. On the left margin is a horse's head.

The origin of the seal is problematical. It may possibly derive from Roman or Sasanian Mesopotamia, for the general arrangement and style of the bust is in harmony with Sasanian imagery, although the cap and garment indicate a portrait of a non-Iranian. The visible hair is an indeterminate indicator. The workmanship has distinctly non-Sasanian, or at least non-Iranian, aspects: the rendering of the eye and the interior polish given to the intaglio surface. The addition of an animal head is also uncharacteristic, although somewhat reminiscent of the countermarks placed by the Hephthalites on Sasanian *drahms* (R. Göbl, *Dokumente zur Geschichte der iranischen Hunnen im Baktrien und Indien* [Wiesbaden, 1967] IV, pl. 8–13).

Publications: King 1860, p. 149. King 1872, II, pl. iv/6. *MMA Hand-Book No. 9*, p. 35, no. 30. Osten, fig. 132.

9 (style A). Inscription 22. Bust of a Roman within a plain ring border. He wears a laurel wreath and a chlamys, which is fastened on the right shoulder.

It is not surprising that some Roman seals should have been used in the Sasanian kingdom, whether they were acquired in war or commerce or were brought by Roman captives or merchants. At least three other Roman portrait seals with Middle Persian inscriptions are known: (1) an example in a private collection in Tehran (Frye 1970, p. 82 and fig. 12); (2) a nicolo seal (Furtwängler, pl. LXII/22) that carries the inscription 'pst'n ZY yztyynn, a syntactic variation of inscription 15; and (3) B.M. AC 23. King suggested that the present seal may be a portrait of the young (clean-shaven) Caracalla, emperor A.D. 211–217. The likeness is close; cf. his coin type, Richter, no. 575b.

Third century.

Publications: *MMA Hand-Book No. 9*, p. 32, no. 11. Osten, fig. 130. Göbl 1973, pl. 36/3.

12 (style B). Inscription i. Nongenuine. A male bust with bearded face. A sort of crown is worn, with a small korymbos. The hair is bunched in back. A necklace is awkwardly depicted within a V-cut garment.

Modern.

1 ae. Male bust in a complex motif

132 (style B). Inscription 13. Male bust with bearded face in left profile, facing a lion passant. Hair bound and straight. Single-bead earring. Drapery in manner of no. 15, above.

Such combinatory motifs are rare; cf. Berlin 1053, where the bust is in the usual orientation. It may be suggested that the owner is depicting his device juxtaposed with his portrait. (See also below, 9 bb.)

1 ba. Female full-length figure with flower

In subject matter, motifs 1 ba and 1 bd clearly fall together and contrast with 1 bb. The range of imagery of the former two may be summarized as follows. A woman stands or sits in profile, against a plain background or within an arch (see 1 bd/93; B.M. CB 1-2; Leningrad 115; Ghirshman 1976, pl. xxxix/2; Göbl 1973, 12a). The pillared arch otherwise occurs with the altar motif (cf. 1 da, 1 db), hence a temple context seems indicated. The woman, in the clearest depictions, wears a floor- or ankle-length pleated dress and a cape. She holds (a) a flower (B.M. CC series; *SPA* IV, pl. 256 g; Berlin 1097 ff.; ANS B.5; Birmingham 82; Louvre II, A.1428-29; Mordtmann, pl. iv/38), usually clearly the tulip, motif 7 b; or (b) two flowers (B.M. CC 12, Leningrad 177); or (c) a large ring (Göbl 1973, 12a; Leningrad 115; Mordtmann, pl. III/84; ANS C'2; *Foroughi*, pl. xxxix/76); or (d) flower and ring (Göbl 1973, 12b; Mordtmann, pl. vi/no. II); or (e) a leafy branch (Geneva 98); or (f) she simply raises her hands (B.M. CE 1; ANS D.2). She is alone or accompanied by a child (B.M. CC 1; Göbl 1973, 12b); seated, she may hold a child instead of a flower (Göbl 1973, 12b; B.M. CD 2; Leningrad 180; Mordtmann, pl. III/26). The association of tulip, ring, and child is more strongly indicated on B.M. CD 1, where a woman holds a child who grasps a wreathed ring. The ring and the flower are interchangeable in scenes



141



122



134



121

of a man and a woman, motifs 1 ca, cb. While arrangements of two women (B.M. CG 2; Leningrad 170; Göbl 1973, 12c; Louvre II, A.1435) are obscure in meaning, it should be noted that a male, sometimes priestly, figure (see 1 da) occurs in the same pose as the woman and likewise grasps a flower (Leningrad 142; Debevoise, pl. 1/8; B.M. BD 10). A man holds both ring and flower on *Foroughi*, pl. xxxix/73.

The female figures on these seals are in harmony with the portrait seals (motif 1 be), which must depict the image of a "noble lady" (*zan ī āzād*). Since no figure is depicted as a queen, there is no reason to interpret the more naturalistic examples as the goddess Anāhīd, who is crowned and has a royal hair style on Wahrām II's coins (Göbl 1968, nos. 68–81) and on Narseh's investiture relief at Naqsh-e Rostam. The most cautious interpretation which emerges from this complex of imagery is that a woman displays her married status and prays or gives thanks for fertility. She holds either a flower, possibly as an offering to the *yazds* (cf. the role of flowers in modern Zoroastrian *āfrīnagān* rites), or the ring signifying her marriage contract (see motif 1 ca).

141 (style C). A woman standing in right profile, wearing a long dress and cape. One braid of hair is indicated. She holds a flower, apparently with both hands; simply the right hand is more conventional. An excavation find from Nishapur.

122 (style C). Same as preceding; no braid is shown.

134 (style C). Same as preceding, except that two flowers are held. That in the left hand hangs downward; both are greatly simplified.

Publications: *Handbook*, p. 449. Osten, fig. 105. *SPA I*, p. 795, fig. 273c. Göbl 1973, 12a⁶.

121 (style C). A woman, similar to the preceding, stands within an arch. It is not clear whether she is holding any object; one arm is outstretched.

Publications: Osten, fig. 104. *SPA I*, p. 795, fig. 273d.

1 bb. Female figure with scarf

114 (style B). A woman, framed by the long ribbon or scarf she holds, is in motion walking or, more probably, dancing toward the right. Her hair is braided behind. She wears a transparent, close-fitting garment belted at the waist. Its collar and cuffs are indicated, as well as some folds on the forearms.

In this motif, the woman may be represented as here (B.M. CB 4; Leningrad 113; *Morgan*, pl. xxxix/319; cf. *Foroughi*, pl. xxxix/75) or wearing a long, full dress (B.M. CB 3; Leningrad 114). By all appearances the subject is a dancing girl, although, again, the goddess Anāhīd has been suggested. The motif is clearly related to the more complex festive iconography on Sasanian ewers and jugs, which presumably served as wine vessels. The depictions on these are complicated by the use of Dionysiac motifs (on which see Ettinghausen, pp. 3–10). But occasionally the simple dancing scene is shown; cf. the variation on this theme on *Sas. Silver* no. 23 and the detached plaque illustrated in Lukonin 1967, fig. 172.

Publications: Osten, fig. 109. *SPA* I, p. 808, fig. 281c. Göbl 1973, 12a⁴.



1 bc. Two female figures

36 (style C). The seal has not been located. Seals showing two women were referred to above, under 1 ba. This seal, as drawn by C. W. King, is somewhat different. Two women face each other. Their hair is straight and bound with a fillet; it is not braided but falls to the shoulders. They wear long, pleated dresses. A staff rises from between them, and on either side of the tip is a dot. Each extends a hand behind her back and seems to hold a sickle-like object. The subject, if actually Sasanian, is unclear.

Publications: King 1866, p. 108, no. 3. King 1872, II, pl. iv/13. King 1885, pl. viii/6. Osten, fig. 111. *SPA* I, p. 473, fig. 126s.



1 bd. Seated female figure with flower.

93 (style C). A woman, dressed and with braided hair as in 1 ba, seated within an arch. She holds a flower in one or

both hands. For interpretation, see 1 ba. Cf. B.M. CD 3, 5, 6; Leningrad 182.

Publications: *MMA Hand-Book No. 12*, p. 47, no. 36. Osten, fig. 103. *SPA I*, p. 795, fig. 273b. Göbl 1973, 12a⁷.

1 be. Female bust in right profile.



6 (style B). Inscription 11. Female portrait bust with long straight hair bound with a fillet and divided into four braids. A single-bead earring is worn. Drapery is shown in horizontal folds. There is slight definition of the breasts. Cf. B.M. BA 3-5; Göbl 1973, 14a; Berlin 999, 1056-57; *Foroughi*, pl. XLV/125-26.

Fourth century.

Publications: King 1866, p. 108, no. 2. King 1872, II, pl. iv/7. *MMA Hand-Book No. 9*, p. 31, no. 5. King 1885, pl. viii/5. Osten, fig. 127.



57 (style C). Inscription 21. The same as the preceding. A simple necklace is apparently added; no drapery folds occur. The accentuation of the breasts is normal in Sasanian style; the aesthetically ideal woman is said to be "with breasts like quinces" (*bēh pistān*, see *Xusrav un rēdag* 96).

Late fourth to fifth century.

Publications: Osten, fig. 128. Göbl 1973, 14a.

1 ca. A male and a female figure: standing.



154 (style C). A man (left) and woman join hands and grasp a flower, which hangs downward. The man, whose hair is bound, wears a long, girded coat and apparently a cloak. The woman, with braided hair, wears the long dress seen above.

B.M. CG 6 provides a clearer variant of this motif. See also Berlin 1110; Pirouzan 5.6-7; Göbl 1973, 17a. As in motif 1 ba, a ring ornamented with ribbons may be held instead (*SPA IV*, pl. 256 pp; Louvre II, A.1432; Mordtmann, pl. III/55). The relationship of offspring to this motif is made clear on Berlin 1116, where a man and woman raise a hand toward one another on either side of a child. The Zoroastrian marriage ceremony, like those of many cultures, involves the joining of hands. The flower, as in

1 ba, may be votive as well as a sign of greeting and affection (as in 1 aa and 9 ba). The ring grasped by either or both partners or their offspring apparently represents the marriage compact. More specifically, it may symbolize the delegation of authority from husband to wife, whether or not it precisely indicates the notion of “fortune” (*xwarrah*). The symbolism of contract and certification of authority is implicit in the ring. It had been an attribute of the Achaemenid Ahura Mazda. On Arsacid coins (Sellwood, types 77/9, 84/102) and seals (Masson, nos. 42, 45) and on the Tang-i Sarvak reliefs (Henning, pls. ii–iii), it indicates the divine bestowal of royal power. This sense is retained throughout the Sasanian period; see the Persepolis graffito (*CII Kartir*, pl. LXXXVIII), the investiture reliefs, and the flying geniuses of Taq-i Bustan (*Taq-i-Bustan I*, pl. XIII). But the ring also became more generalized to represent the bond between king and subject, as on the stele of Artabanus V and Xwasak and also on a Sasanian period plate (Dalton, pl. 188). The symbolizing of the husband-wife relationship marks another level of the ring’s generalization.

Publications: Osten, fig. 113. *SPA I*, p. 473, fig. 126u, p. 808, fig. 281d.

1 cb. A male and a female figure: seated.

44 (style D). A man reclines on a couch, facing a woman seated on a stool. Each raises a flower toward the other. The hair of each is bound with a fillet. The man apparently does not wear a coat; he is belted. The woman wears a long, belted dress. At the top are two six-pointed sun-stars.

This is a variant illustration of the marriage contract theme. On B.M. CF 2 the couple grasp the beribboned ring. The couch as an indication of domestic life is notable on B.M. CD 1 (showing a woman and child) and B.M. CF 1 (where a woman serves the reclining man). Cf. also B.M. BE 4 and Leningrad 132, showing only the man on the couch and holding a flower.

Publications: Osten, fig. 106. *SPA I*, p. 473, fig. 126r, p. 808, fig. 281e.

100 (style D). Two figures as in the preceding but holding the ring (as in B.M. CF 2). The man wears a long, belted coat. The woman clearly has her hair in a braid. A six-pointed sun-star is at the top.





1 da. Ritual scene with male figure(s).

125 (style C). A man stands in right profile before a flaming fire altar. He is a priest, for he raises the ritual *barsom* (a bundle of sticks) toward the altar. He is bearded, has straight, bound hair, and wears a long coat. Behind him is a leafy branch. The altar is of a rather simple form, having only a single upper plinth.

The *barsom* was and is an indispensable implement in the major Zoroastrian rituals. Since the scene given is by a fire altar, it probably represents the most important sacrificial rite, the *yasna*. The priest is presumably the celebrant (*zōd*) and could be at the very point of reciting “I wish the *barsom* for this sacrifice” (the Sasanian understanding of *Yasna* 2.1 of the Avesta). If this is granted, then the plant may be, not a generalization of “flourishing plant life” (*urwar ī āvōyišnōmand*, Pahlavi *Vendidad* 19.1), whose fertility is one purpose of the sacrifice, but the sacrificial *hōm* plant itself. Similar seals are Leningrad 152; Berlin 865, 1077; B.M. BD 4. The priest is shown praying before the altar without a *barsom* in B.M. BD 1–3, 5; *SPA* I, p. 791, fig. 281a; Berlin 2155. He may also be shown alone in either pose (B.M. BD 7, 12–13).



52 (style D). Two priests flank a fire altar, each raising a *barsom*. The figure on the left is as in the preceding, but it is clearer that he is ungirded. The figure on the right wears a similar long coat but is girded. He has a long braid of hair and wears a sort of turban. The altar is of conventional form, with two upper and lower plinths.

Presumably the *zōd* and his assistant (the *rāspīg*) are depicted. B.M. BD 15 has the same scene. The use of a distinct priestly headdress is not unusual (see J. J. Modi, *The Religious Ceremonies and Customs of the Parsees* [Bombay, 1937] p. 192 for an example). But long, braided hair is unexpected in the context of Zoroastrian ritual. Nevertheless priests with such hair are represented, without any clear headdress, on B.M. BD 6, 10, and Leningrad 142.

Publications: Osten, fig. 112. *SPA* I, p. 473, fig. 126t.

1 db. Ritual scene with man and animal.



193 (style D). A priest, attired as on no. 125, above, extends a *barsom* over a small fire altar. He looks back at a ram standing in right profile.

Blood sacrifices, particularly of sheep, were routine in Sasanian Zoroastrianism. (See, e.g., the allotment of sheep to fire foundations in Šāpūr I's inscription on the Ka'ba-yi Zardusht [ŠKZ]. See also M. Boyce, "Ātaš-zōhr and Āb-zōhr," *JRAS* 1966, pp. 102 ff.) Hence the inclusion of a ram in a ritual scene is natural. Cf. B.M. BD 16; Leningrad 154, 156; Louvre II, A.1437, 1442; Berlin 1078–80; Göbl 1973, 4c.

Publication: Osten, fig. 28.

2. MYTHICAL OR HEROIC FIGURES

2 a. Putto.

174 (style B). Inscription 40. A bearded, winged figure walks toward the right, holding a ring with ribbons in his outstretched hands. His hair is bound and straight. The covert feathers of the wing are indicated by a plain band.

This personage may most easily be understood as a minor spirit bringing a blessing upon the marriage compact. If the ring is understood in the same manner as above (1 ba), the motif would thus be a invocation for fertility. This male, and usually adult, figure is analogous in function to the Nike of Parthian seals (see Masson fig. 38–42) and Arsacid coinage, who also occurs on the Behistun relief, and to the putto who brings a diadem ribbon to Šāpūr I on his Bishapur relief. He is depicted frequently: B.M. BK series; Leningrad 123, 159; *Gorelick* 63; Geneva 104; Louvre I, D.256; Louvre II, A.1412, 1438–39; Berlin 1104, 1107; *Newell* 611–13; Stockholm 17–18; *Aulock* 235; Pirouzan 3.2; *QAN* D.332, 337; Mordtmann, pl. III/128; Göbl 1973, 13a. He is rendered similar to Mercury on *SPA* IV, pl. 256 BB, made a gryllus on B.M. BK 6–7, and doubled on Pirouzan 5.8 and *QAN* D.148. On *Clercq*, pl. xxx/3524 he holds a cup.

Late fifth to sixth century.

Publications: *MMA Hand-Book No. 12*, p. 46, no. 7. Osten, fig. 108. *SPA* I, p. 800, fig. 276a.

60a (style C). The same figure as on the preceding, but beardless and holding a beribboned flower, presumably a tulip. Above, left, is an eight-pointed sun-star. The texturing of the arms and legs, as if to indicate thick hair or fur (as on the Gayōmard figure, motif 2 d, and on animal bodies) adds a further fabulous element to the





image. Hamburg 94 likewise shows a flower instead of the ring; the interchangeability of these has already been seen. Publications: Osten, fig. 110a. Göbl 1973, 13a.

7 (style C). The same as the preceding. Border of elongated beads. By a small error in the cutting of the seal, the left leg has been made to appear as if crossing over the right. It should be understood as positioned behind it (cf. B.M. BK 4-5).

A find from Qasr-i Abu Nasr.

Publication: *QAN*, p. 39, pl. iv/9.

2 ba. Lamassu: standing.



46 (style B). A winged bull with human head stands in right profile. The head has a bearded face and wears a flat cap or crown. Before it is a three-branched plant; above left is a crescent moon.

This ancient figure of Mesopotamian and Achaemenid art could most easily have been interpreted in Sasanian times as the beneficent Gōpatšāh, who was half bull, half man. Literally “King of Gōpat,” he was thought to reign in or beyond the ancient Iranian homeland in Central Asia. He was king and spiritual chief (*rad*), made immortal by Ohrmazd. By performing the *yasna* rite on the shore of the world-encircling Fraxwkard Sea and pouring libations into it, he slew the vermin of the waters and kept their population down. (See particularly *Dādistān ī mēnōg ī xrad* 44.35, 62.31-36=Andreas pp. 49.1-2, 70.15-71.8.) The moon and the plant are appropriate accessory images with such a promoter of prosperity. He appears with his distinctive headdress or else simply with his hair bound; in at least one case his crown is given diadem ribbons. Cf. B.M. EJ series; Leningrad 260-62, 265, 267; Pirouzan 3.5; Geneva 100; Berlin pl. v/224, 1139, 1142; *QAN* D.9, 13, 233; Hamburg 126; *Foroughi*, pls. XLV/128-XLVI/131; Mordtmann, pl. v/52; Göbl 1973, 66c.

Publication: Osten, fig. 62.



90 (style B). Same as the preceding, without accessory motifs. The headdress seems a sort of turban, leaving the top of the head bare; a bunch of hair is gathered behind the head.

Publications: Osten, fig. 61. Göbl 1973, 66c².

2 bb. Lamassu: lodged.

192 (style C). The lamassu or Gōpatšāh is here in the alternative bovine position; he is kneeling or, heraldically, lodged. His hair is straight and is bound. Two-bead earring. Border of elongated beads. For this position, cf. B.M. EH series; Leningrad 263–64, 270; Louvre II, A.1419, 1421–23; Berlin 1132–33, 1138; *QAN* D.184; Mordtmann, pl. v/121; Göbl 1973, 66a; ANS B.12.



215 (style C). The same as the preceding. Border of elongated beads.

2 c. Gryllus (human-headed hawk)

69 (style A). Within a border of two converging plant sprays stands a figure with a bird's body and a man's head. A crescent moon above, left. The characteristically blunt tail would indicate that the body is that of a hawk or eagle (motif 4 a); its posture, however, is that of the cock (motif 4 c). The head is beardless, with straight, bound hair.



The seals attest a variety of fantastic combinations. A seal of the Foroughi collection (Lerner, pl. 11/5) clearly shows a cock's body with human head. *QAN* pl. v/20 is a gryllus with an ambiguous bird body. Ram-headed cocks are attested (Hamburg 131, Berlin 1486), also stag-headed ones (*SPA* IV, pl. 255 pp). B.M. MG 3 places a ram's head on a duck's body, but the feet are a cock's. These fantastic motifs may be compared with the more complex combinations of B.M. MG 4 and Louvre II, A.1424. That the choice of variants was wide is indicated by an antelope-headed peacock (Göbl 1973, 75a). These seals should not, however, be grouped together with the variants of motif 2 a, where the putto is shown with animal hair (above, 60a and 7) or as part bird (B.M. BK 6–7). It remains uncertain whether the grylli received a specific interpretation from traditional mythology. Their invention would have widened the range of personal devices available.

Publication: Lerner, pl. 11/4.



2 d. Gayōmard, usually with dog.

This motif consists of a quasi-human figure with nude, hairy body and shaggy, lion-like or human head. His body

is shown frontally; the head is usually frontal but may be in right profile. Arms and legs are outspread, and in either hand he grasps a staff. A dog is usually at his feet. Like various other figures (e.g., the putto and the *lamassu*), he may be shown reduplicated. Style and execution are usually quite simple. The published examples may be classified according to the presence of the variable details of the image. These are (1) the dog's presence, (2) star markings on the staves, (3) the delineation of prominent ears on the figure, (4) indication of an erect phallus. Seals with features 1-4: B.M. BF 2, 4, 10, BG 1-3; *Gorelick* 61; Debevoise, pl. 1/5; Pirouzan 6.8; MMA 155, 163. Features 1-3: B.M. BF 3, 5-9, 13; Leningrad 761, 764; Louvre I, D.154; *Foroughi*, pl. xxxvii/58; Göbl 1973, 1d (de Clercq); *Aulock* 210; MMA 157-58. Features 1-2: MMA 156. Features 1-2, 4: Leningrad 762; *Foroughi*, pl. xxxix/72. Features 1-3, 4: B.M. BF 1; Hamburg 96. Feature 1: *QAN*, pls. iv/3, v/23; Hamburg 97; MMA 76. Features 2, 4: Kassel 218. Feature 4: B.M. BF 12; MMA 75, 77, 162. None of these features: B.M. BF 11.

The figure is probably, although not certainly, the primal man, Gayōmard. The ithyphallic and animal-haired depiction could suggest a demon; but he is accompanied by the beneficent dog and, on the amulets discussed under 2 e, by other auspicious animals as well. Moreover, he is in a posture of microcosmic completeness; with limbs spread he is spherical. Of Gayōmard it is said: "(Ohrmazd) created Gayōmard shining as the sun. His height was four average reeds [=40 feet]; his width tallied with his height" (*Bundahišn* I A.13=Anklesaria, p. 21.4-6). In this same fashion the human body is said to be a "microcosm" (*andāzag ī gētīg*, *ibid.* xxviii.1-3=Anklesaria, p. 189.3-8), and the doctrine is attributed to Avestan tradition (the *dēn*). Gayōmard is never defined as of conventional human form. The *Bundahišn* might be taken as implying common knowledge of some nonhuman traits when it specifies: "He possessed eyes and ears and a tongue and genitals" (I A.13=Anklesaria, p. 21.10-11). For his hirsute quality, compare the putto above (2 a/60a and 7). The dog could well be the Yellow-Ears who is mentioned in a late Zoroastrian tradition as created to guard Gayōmard's slain body against the demons (*Rivayats*, pp. 259-60). He is probably identical with the prototype of dogs: "The dawn-yellow-haired dog was created the first of dogs; it is the chief of dogs" (*Bundahišn* XVII.9=Anklesaria, p. 120.14-15). Gayō-

mard is both the source of the human race and the first person who will be raised from the dead at the renovation of the world. This eschatological role would render his invocation on seals all the more meaningful. Less significantly, as a giant, Gayōmard could easily be identified with the constellation Orion. Yellow-Ears would then be Canis Major, Orion's dog. (For other texts, Sven S. Hartman, *Gayōmart* [Uppsala, 1953].)

155 (style D). Gayōmard with dog. Features 1–4.
Publication: Osten, fig. 25.



155

163 (style D). The same; most of the dog is broken off.
Publications: *Handbook*, p. 449. Osten, fig. 27. *SPA I*, p. 473, fig. 126v.

157 (style D). The same. Features 1–3.
Publication: Osten, fig. 26.

158 (style D). The same as the preceding.
Publications: Osten, fig. 21. Göbl 1973, 1a.

156 (style D). The same. Features 1–2. A find from Qasr-i Abu Nasr.
Publication: *QAN*, p. 38 and pl. iv/1.



63

76 (style D). The same. Feature 1. A find from Qasr-i Abu Nasr.

162 (style D). Gayōmard alone. Feature 4.
Publication: Osten, fig. 22.

77 (style D). Gayōmard alone, with fully human head in right profile. The hair is straight and bound. Cf. *Lenin-grad* 762; *Foroughi*, pl. xxxix/72; *Aulock* 211.
Publication: Osten, fig. 23.

75 (style D). The same as the preceding.
Publication: Osten, fig. 24.

2 e. Group scene with Gayōmard.

Gayōmard occurs on complex amulets as well as on seals: Hamburg 93; Louvre II, A.1254–55; Göbl 1973, pl. 38/26;



157



158



162



156



77



76



75

71

an example in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, published in P. Ackerman, "The Iranian Serpentarius and Gemini," *Bull. of the American Institute for Persian Art and Archaeology* 4, no. 1 (1935) pp. 126–29. The dog is always present. The Louvre amulets have cocks at the top of Gayōmard's staves, a scorpion by the left one and a snake entwined on the right one. Göbl 1973, pl. 38/26 has symmetrical snakes and scorpions. The others have a profusion of animal and human figures, but the Hamburg amulet lacks the snakes. One identifiable submotif is the she-wolf suckling two infants (see motif 2 h), which occurs on the left side of the Hamburg and Boston objects. The following seals show a motif clearly related to these scenes. In two cases (B.M. BF 5 and *Foroughi*, pl. xxxvii/58a) a version of it is found on the back of seals with the Gayōmard motif (cf. 60b below).

78 (style D). Inscriptions 23, 26, 34, 46. At left center is an ithyphallic human figure with long ears, holding a staff in his right hand; these features would seem to identify him as Gayōmard. He joins hands with a human couple who seem to be dancing. In the margin, clockwise from the bottom, a dog, scorpion, cock, and snake.

This is probably the fundamental order of the motif. *Foroughi*, pl. xxxvii/59 shows the same, except that the animals, apart from the dog, face in opposite directions. (The proper names Dēnādūr Dārāy may be clearly read on it.) B.M. CG 12 approximately reverses the positions of dog and cock, while CG 11 and 13 omit the scorpion but maintain the relative positions of the other three. The two other general categories of arrangements are illustrated by nos. 159 and 60b, below.

If Gayōmard were taken here in an astrological sense, the two figures of indeterminate sex could be regarded as the neighboring constellation Gemini, i.e., two young men (Middle Persian *Du Paikar*, "Two Figures"). Of the animals, however, only the dog and the scorpion make astrological sense. It is more promising to think of Gayōmard's creative and eschatological roles. The human couple who grew from his semen, Mašyē and Mašyānē, were the parents of all human life; and they will be raised from the dead directly after Gayōmard (*Saddar Bundeheš*, p. 176, par. 15 = *Rivayats*, p. 574). Hence they would be logical associates of his on the seals. The entire motif, in its various forms, would make good sense as a representa-



tion of the Renovation (Frašgard), when evil will be finally defeated and the material universe will return to the perfection of its primordial, motionless state. The apparent rejoicing or prayer, which the three figures express in raising their arms (cf. the depictions of priests cited under 1 da), is appropriate to that occasion. The animals, however, may not be understood in their strictly Zoroastrian sense, if this interpretation is correct. Orthodox teaching, while praising the dog and cock, regards the scorpion and snake as vermin, creations of the demon Ahreman which corrupt the earth. Since the scorpion occurs as a principal seal motif (5 b) and the snake as a subsidiary one (B.M. FC 1, NC 3), these animals seem to be beneficent and apotropaic. In western Mithraic iconography they are benevolent expressions of the earth element; and it may be noted that Gayōmard is associated with the earth, as well as with the bull sacrifice about which Mithraism centers. In late sources he has the epithet “king of clay” (Gilšāh, e.g., *Šāhnāma* VI, p. 526.4416), the origin of which may lie in his eschatological importance. Cf. the statement: “Mankind (is) of that clay out of which (Ohrmazd) fashioned Gayōmard . . . He created Gayōmard from Spandarmad (i.e., the earth divinity)” (*Pahlavi Rivayat*, XLVI.36). The seal may be expressing, in conflict with the texts, an expected unification of the entire realm of material life at the Renovation.

A find from Qasr-i Abu Nasr.

Publication: *QAN*, p. 38 and pl. iv/7.



159 (style D). Three human figures as in the preceding, but the Gayōmard figure is more crudely rendered and does not join hands with the others. The order of animals is: cock, snake, scorpion, dog.

The unifying feature of a second group of seals is the juxtaposition of cock and dog, despite variations in their positioning. B.M. CG 10 has the same order but with the snake at the bottom. B.M. CG 16 arranges all the elements in a circle, while CG 15 replaces the scorpion with a camel. Both B.M. BF 5 and *Foroughi*, pl. xxxvii/61 simply omit the scorpion. B.M. CG 14 has snake and scorpion in their old positions; the bottom is unclear, but dog and cock occur together on the back.

Fifth century.

60b (style D). Inscriptions 25 and e. Carved on the back of



60a (see 2 a). A linear arrangement of the motif. Beginning above the head of the putto are: the dog, Gayōmard, the couple and the snake above them, the cock and scorpion. The basic order of no. 78 is thus clearly reflected. Cf. other rearrangements in *QAN*, pl. iv/8 and *Foroughi*, pl. xxxvii/58a. Finally, a greatly simplified example, B.M. CG 17, shows only two animals, perhaps a dog and a scorpion.

Late fourth century.

Publication: Osten, fig. 110b.

2 f. Hunting or combat scenes between man and animal.

219 (style D). A man on horseback in right profile hunts a rampant quadruped. The horse is in the conventional passant position. The quadruped has one horn on its forehead; either a unicorn or some other fabulous animal must be intended. There is a very slight indication of the rider's raised right arm, indicating that he is spearing the animal. Above, a crescent moon.

Realistic hunt scenes, a favorite subject on Sasanian silverware, occur sparingly on seals. Their small number is presumably due to the aristocratic nature of the motif. Cf. the Bibliothèque Nationale seal (*SPA* IV, pl. 256 D); B.M. BL 7; Louvre I, D.255, II, A.1440; *Foroughi*, pl. xxxviii/66, 67; *ibid.* 64 with Leningrad 128 and Berlin 1088; Berlin 1087 and *Gorelick* 62. Other motifs with a man on horseback include investiture scenes (B.M. BL 1; *Foroughi*, pl. xxxviii/70), implied investitures showing the diadem ribbons (Leningrad 131; Göbl 1973, 6b [de Clercq]), and less specific depictions of one or two riders (B.M. BL 2, 5, 6; Leningrad 126, 130–31). Least common is the fantastic hunt scene. B.M. BL 3–4, Leningrad 129, *Morgan*, pl. xxxix/316, and *Foroughi*, pl. xxxviii/65



agree in depicting the hunt of a hydra-headed monster. None shows a horselike animal. These mythological subjects, whose precise identity remains unknown, presumably have pre-Sasanian roots. The Parthian seals from Nisa provide not only realistic hunt scenes (Masson, fig. 2–8) but a combat between a sphinx and a man afoot (Masson, fig. 1).



51 (style D). A man stands in left profile, center, spearing a rampant lion. A second rampant lion is behind him. Cf. *QAN* D.146; *ANS* B.4; Ak-Depe, p. 106; *Clercq*, pl. xxx/3528; B.M. CG 1–2; Berlin 861, 1578, where only a single lion occurs. The man has straight, bound hair and wears a long, belted coat. He could be any of numerous figures from the epic tradition. In the *Šāhnāma* heroes are frequently described with lion metaphors – e.g., lion-killer, lion-seizer, lion-smiter, lion-keeper, as well as lion, lion-hearted, lion-natured, lion-figured, lion-armed. In Middle Persian literature, cf. the incident in which a page proves himself by capturing two lions alive (*Xusrāw ud rēdag* 110–24).

2 g. The hero Frēdōn.



153a (style B). To right, the hero stands in left profile, raising a mace in his left hand and reaching with his right to seize a rampant, ithyphallic wolf. The hero wears Parthian dress: a *kulāf* and a long, high-belted coat slashed on the sides, which descends over his trousers. His mace is shown simply with a round head, but on B.M. BH 1, where he overcomes a demon, its distinctive bull-head shape is given (the *gurza-yi gāwsar* or *gāwpaikar* of the *Šāhnāma*). The wolf has its forelegs joined behind its back, as if bound, and a rope hangs from its neck. Such a specific depiction must indicate a myth which has not survived.

This scene has exact parallels on Berlin 1354 and *Newell* 622. All three associate it with motif 2 h. So does the Parthian Falkiner amulet, which shows Frēdōn defeating an ithyphallic demon; it is published and the identification of Frēdōn made in A. D. H. Bivar, “A Parthian Amulet,” *BSOAS* 30 (1967) pp. 512–24. Bivar also discusses the depiction of Parthian dress on the Sasanian seal B.M. BC 3 (cf. also BC 4); such dress is probably implied by the term

“heroic dress” (*jāma-yi pahlavī*) in the *Šāhnāma* (cf. G. Lazard, “Pahlavi/Pahlavāni dans le Šāhnāme,” *Studia Iranica* 1 (1972), p. 26). Contrast Göbl 1973, 2e (Bibliothèque Nationale), where a nude Herculean figure is shown attacking a demon with a knotted club.

2 h. She-wolf with infant and cub.

153b (style B). Inscription 42. A she-wolf stands in right profile; beneath her, a cub and a human infant reach toward her teats.

Parallels occur in *Foroughi*, pl. xxxix/78, Berlin 1354, and *Newell* 622. A wolf with two cubs is shown on Louvre I, D.209, II, A.1341–42; *SPA* IV, pl. 256 ff; *QAN* D.308, 313–14; Mordtmann, pl. iv/49. With one cub: B.M. EA 3; Mordtmann, pl. v/69. With two infants: B.M. EA 1–2; *SPA* IV, pl. 256 z; *Foroughi*, pl. xxxix/77; *QAN* D.307; the Falkiner amulet (see reference in 2 g). In view of the variability shown in this adaptation of the Romulus and Remus motif, it is impossible to attribute a specific meaning to it. Here again the orthodox Zoroastrian view of the wolf as pernicious does not obstruct its presence in an auspicious motif. The association of this subject with both Frēdōn and Gayōmard (see the reference to amulets in 2 e) seems to indicate a definite mythological reference. Cf. the nursing of the infant Frēdōn (Persian Firēdōn) by the cow Barmāya and the raising of Zāl by the *simurgh*, as related in the *Šāhnāma*. (See also the reference in 3 f.) The present subject may represent an adaptation of the Roman motif to depict the infancy of another of the epic heroes.

Sixth century.

2 i. The “tamer of lions”.

8 (style C). A bearded man in a long, unbelted robe stands in frontal pose with his head in right profile; his hair is straight and bound. He raises his arms, apparently in prayer or thanksgiving. At his feet are two recumbent lions.

Clearer examples are B.M. 189 and CG 8. This “lion-dominator” contrasts with the traditional lion-stranglers and lion-danglers of Mesopotamian, Achaemenid, and Parthian art. He may well be Daniel in the lions’ den,



employed as a Christian symbol. His dress is priestly (cf. B.M. BD 5, BE 1, and Göbl 1973, 4d [Bibliothèque Nationale]), as is his gesture (Berlin 1070, 1075; Louvre I, D.252; MMA 2 e/159, above). The subject somewhat parallels the Iranian heroic imagery of the *Šāhnāma*; e.g., it is said of a hero: "The lion will kiss the dust of his tracks" (I, p. 350.1671).

Publications: *MMA Hand-Book No. 9*, p. 33, no. 15. *MMAB* 20 (1925) p. 83, fig. 5. Osten, fig. 107.

2 j. Male figure with winged horse.



144 (style D). To right, a man stands in right profile. He is apparently bearded, has his hair bound, and wears a long, belted coat. He holds a staff before him, seemingly with both hands. Behind him walks a winged horse. Above is an upright crescent (or "y") followed by two other faint marks. (Cf. inscription b.)

The personage is presumably a hero or minor divinity. The motif and seal may perhaps be Parthian. See *QAN* D.149, where a man holds a horse, which need not be a related motif.

Publications: Osten, fig. 16. *SPA* I, p. 473, fig. 126q.

3. ANIMALS: QUADRUPEDS.

3 a. Bull.

The frequency of the bull motif is indicative of the importance of cattle in the economy, mythology, and religious ritual of the central Iranian peoples. Cattle were men's partners in agriculture (see the plowing motif of Louvre II, A.1441, 1443, and Berlin 1091). They provided milk for food and sacrificial offerings and might themselves be sacrificed, while cattle urine aided in ritual purification. The prosperity of the herds is a major concern of the Avestan texts; and their good treatment earned religious merit, being pleasing to the divinity Wahman ("Good Mind"), their patron. The whole animal family *Gōspand*, comprising the beneficent grazing animals, began with the first pair of cattle. The Sasanian seals usually depict the bull as a natural animal. Presumably the domestic variety is to be understood; the wild zebu does occur on a silver plate, however, as an object of the royal hunt (Brunner, fig. 3).

The bull is only occasionally made an astral figure by the addition of wings (e.g., *Foroughi*, pl. XLIX/150). But its other occurrences in the mythology reflect its general social importance: (a) The primal bull (*gāw ī ēkdād*) was, like Gayōmar, slain in the attack of Ahreman and his demons. But, in dying tragically, he fertilized the earth with his blood and gave rise to the fifty-five species of grain and twelve of medicinal herbs. His semen was carried to the moon; from it was created the first pair of cattle and then of other species. (b) The bull's soul, Gōšurwān (also simply Gōš and Druwāsp) likewise proceeded to the moon. This divinity is an assistant to Wahman, along with the moon god (Māh) and several others. Gōšurwān is "the god of all four-footed creatures" (*Draxt ī Asurīg* 51). His close association with the moon is notable. The Pahlavi *Māh Nyāyīšn* 1 (*Zand*, pp. 28–29) explains that the moon was created out of Wahman and Gōšurwān out of the moon god. Hence all three share the epithet "possessing the seed of cattle" (*gōšpand-tōhmag*). This term translates Avestan *gaociθra*, which is a distinctive epithet of the moon in the original scriptures. A seal in Munich (Göbl 1973, 7d) actually depicts Māh with a bull-drawn chariot, as does the Klimova plate in the Hermitage (*SPA* IV, pl. 207 B). For the analogous chariot of Xwar, the sun god, see 3 b. The possibility thus exists that the bull image sometimes represents the moon. (See in the context of 3 g and 3 h.) (c) The bull Srisōg is a manifestation of the primal bull. On his back nine races of mankind migrated across the sea from the central world-continent to the six outer ones. (d) The primal bull will return as the final bull, Hadayōš. His sacrifice by the final savior, Sōšāns, will ritually complete the renovation of the material world, when measured time will come to an end. (e) The form of a bull is assumed by the gods Tištar (*Yašt* 8.16) and Wahrām (*Yašt* 14.7).

The astrological significance of the sign Taurus is in harmony with the mythology. Taurus is the house of the moon's exaltation, when the latter's power to distribute the blessing of water is highest. The sign begins with a "watery" (*ābīg*) and hence fertilizing lunar mansion – the Pleiades (Parwīz, "the Victorious").

Besides the seals below, see motif 6 c for occurrences of the bull.



205



147



207

3 aa. Bull: standing.

205 (style C). Bull standing in right profile.

Cf. B.M. EM series, EO 4; Leningrad 421–22, 424, 427, 435–36; Louvre I, D.210–14, 217, II, A.1364–76; Berlin 269, 1252–62; *Foroughi*, pls. XLIX/163, 165–66, L/167–69; *QAN* D.29, 137, 215, 222, 252–55, 257, 398; Hamburg 103; Hannover 1727; *Newell* 564–66; Debevoise, pl. II/7; Mordtmann, pls. II/71, III/88, IV/152; Göbl 1973, 53b; ANS A.1.1; *Gorelick* 72; Yale 7, 4491, 4497; Pirouzan 6.3 (nursing a calf).

Publication: Osten, fig. 84.



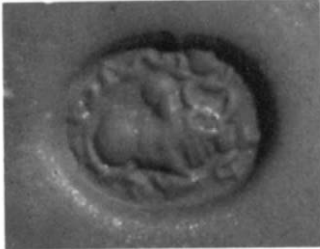
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147 (style D). The same. Residual border of elongated beads.

Publication: Osten, fig. 82.

207 (style C). The same.

3 ab. Bull: lodged.



33

24 (style B). Inscription 17. A bull lodged in right profile.

Cf. B.M. EN series, EO 1–3; Leningrad 423, 428, 452, 466; Louvre I, D.215–16, II, A.1357–63; Berlin 1241–51; *Foroughi*, pl. XLIX/161–62, 164; Stockholm 28–29; *Newell* 567–70; Debevoise, pl. II/5; *Aulock* 217; Mordtmann, pls. III/37, IV/125; Hamburg 104; *Gorelick* 71. A stone relief from Masjid-i Sulaiman, Fars, anticipates this depiction; see Ghirshman 1976, II, pl. xciv/2. So does the reverse motif of a bronze coin type attributed to Vologeses IV (about A.D. 147–91; Sellwood 84/103).

Fourth century.

Publication: Osten, fig. 85.

20



33 (style B). Inscription 10. The same.

Late fourth to early fifth century.

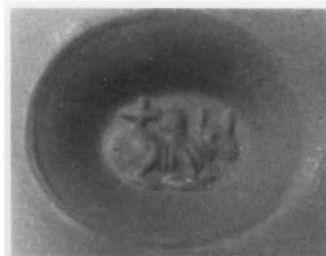
Publications: King 1872, II, pl. iv/5. *MMA Hand-Book* No. 9, p. 34, no. 26. King 1885, pl. VIII/8. Osten, fig. 86.

20 (style B). Inscription 29. The same. Three beads fill the space following the inscription. Rope-pattern border.

Fifth century.

18 (style B). The same. Above left is a four-pointed sun-star.

Publications: *MMA Hand-Book No. 9*, p. 34, no. 25. Osten, fig. 87. Göbl 1973, 53a⁵.



91 (style D). The same.

Publications: Osten, fig. 83. Göbl 1973, 53a³.

3 ac. Bull: boucranium.

67 (style C). Boucranium. The head alone presumably has the same significance as the entire animal. Cf. its various depictions in Berlin 1377–81, 1383, and Louvre II, A.1409. Its occurrence with a ram's head seems to simplify one of the knot motifs (see 6 c). Its juxtaposition with a lion mask (B.M. DM 2) may abbreviate the combat motif 3 ga. On Berlin 1053 it and an antelope (?) head flank a bust, perhaps forming a personal device (cf. 1 ae, above). B.M. EO 6 offers the most complex scene, where a boucranium is found with two lion masks and a flying putto. Unusual is *Gorelick* 86, apparently showing a bull carcass (head and shoulders) being preyed on by an eagle and a vulture. For a further reduction of the bull motif, see below, motif 7 cb. Note a bull-head rhyton depicted on a Cleveland Museum cup (Lukonin 1967, fig. 190).



3 b. Horse.

The image of the horse in Iranian tradition was, like that of the bull, strongly evocative. In Zoroastrian zoology the horse is classed as a genus of the “ass-hoofed” (*xarpāy*) tribe in the family of the beneficent grazing animals (the *gōspand* proper) (*Bundahišn* XIII.8–10=Anklesaria, pp. 94–95). The horse was an essential feature of the epic tradition, and the *Šāhnāma* provides the proper names of such heroic steeds as Rakhš, Šabdīz, Šabrang, Bihzād, and Gulgūn. In Sasanian art, the royal images depicted on reliefs and on silver vessels tend to be mounted; when not, their heroic character is asserted by such royal imagery as the throne or by the deed depicted. (See also above, 2 f, for heroic mounted scenes.) The horse's head was thus an appropriate protome for one of the princely headdresses (Göbl 1968, nos. 56, 63; and Wahrām II's Naqsh-i Rostam relief: Hinz, pl. 119) and a shape for a noble's drinking

rhyton (*Sas. Silver*, no. 47 and Ghirshman 1962, fig. 262, where the whole, harnessed horse occurs).

The horse possessed a celestial significance from primitive Iranian times. In Avestan the sun and the god Apam Napāt are given the epithet “having swift horses” (*aurvaṭ. aspa*); and the Middle Persian form, *arwandaspa*, is likewise applied to these deities (Xwar and Burz). The epithet is thus explained in reference to the sun: “(Xwar) holds its (the sun’s) fine horses as his mount for the Fortune of Druwāsp [=Gōšurwān]” (*Bundahišn* XXVI.65=Anklesaria, p. 171.7–8). That is, he promotes the prosperity of animal life. A Berlin Museum seal (Ghirshman 1962, fig. 298; Göbl 1973, 7c) in fact depicts Xwar with a chariot and two winged horses. The frequency on the seals of the winged, in addition to the natural, horse is notable. The horse thus compares closely with the lion and contrasts sharply with the bull, stag, and ram.

Further, the horse is one of the three bodily forms taken by the god Tištar (the star Sirius), who is the patron of fertilizing rainfall. Tištar defeated the demon Drought at the battle of the Original Creation and so removed the threat to plant and animal life. An epithet of Tištar is “horse of Cancer”; this alludes to the fact that, at the moment of the primordial attack, Tištar was “leading” or “pulling” the ascendant, watery house of Cancer over the eastern horizon (*Zātspram* III.7). The horse, less importantly, is the third form taken by the god Wahrām (*Yašt* 14.9 of the Avesta).

3 ba. Single horse: standing.

61 (style C). A rudimentary horse in right profile. Since the legs are absent, its precise position is uncertain. The conventional pose of the horse in Sasanian art was the passant. Cf. already on the coinage of the Arsacids Phraates I and Mithradates I (Sellwood, types 8/2, 24/25, 30/23, 36/13). On Sasanian seals: B.M. EC series; Leningrad 724, 730, 732, 734; Berlin 1320–21; Stockholm 55; *QAN* D.300, 326; *Gorelick* 66–68; Mordtmann, pl. iv/71, 137; Göbl 1973, 48a.

Publications: *Handbook*, p. 449. Osten, fig. 35.

103 (style C). A horse standing in right profile, with head lowered as if grazing (pascuant). For this position cf. *Gorelick* 66 and, on silverware, *Sas. Met.*, pl. 55; *SPA* IV, pl. 255 BB.



3 bb. Two horses.

189 (style B). Two horses salient in opposite profiles. Border of beads.

This arrangement produces a crosslike pattern, cf. the two rampant lions on the Bibliothèque Nationale ewer (Ghirshman 1962, fig. 404) and on the seal Pirouzan 4.10. See also the cross patterns composed of heads (see below, 6 b). Various other arrangements of two horses occur on seals; B.M. EC 9; Berlin, pl. VI, bottom; *Foroughi*, pl. XLVIII/157; *SPA* IV, pl. 256 BB; Mordtmann, pl. v/57.



3 bc. Single winged horse.

152 (style A). Inscription 24. A winged horse in right profile, walking. Only one wing is shown, as is more common; the feathers are conventionalized by uniform striations lengthwise.

In pre-Sasanian times the pose of the winged horse was less uniform. On a bronze plaque found at Masjid-i Sulaiman, Fars, it simply stands upright (Ghirshman 1976, II, pl. xcVIII/2); while on Arsacid bronze coinage it gallops (Sellwood, types 26/14, 27/4, 28/8). In Sasanian art, the walking pose is usual. (Note, however, the same "grazing" posture on B.M. ED 10 as on 103, above.) For the winged horse in various media, see Ettinghausen, figs. 38, 40–43. In its most elaborate form, the motif figures on the garments depicted on the Afrasiab reliefs (Al'baum, pls. LII–LIII). Cf. the silk textile fragment in *SPA* IV, pl. 202. On seals: B.M. ED series; Leningrad 277–78, 280–81; Louvre I, D.239–40, II, A.1414–15, 1417–18, 1420; *Foroughi*, pls. XLVII/145–XLVIII/156; Berlin, pl. IV, last three rows; *QAN* D.225, 227–29, 231, 238–43, 338; *Gorelick* 69; Hamburg 127; Debevoise, pl. 1/2, 12; Mordtmann, pls. III/86, 22, 163, IV/31, 109, v/59; Birmingham 75; Yale 4; *Aulock* 231; Pirouzan 5.2, 6.1.

Early fourth century.



166 (style A). Inscription 38. The same; but both wings are shown (as on B.M. EF 1–3) and the covert feathers are defined by striations breadthwise.

Sixth century.

Publication: Osten, fig. 67.





62

62 (style B). Inscription 28. The same.
Fifth century.

4 (style B). The same; one wing visible with uniform feathers. A plant element is in front of it and a stylized branch behind.

Publication: Ettinghausen, fig. 42.

119 (style B). The same as the preceding. Covert feathers are differentiated. Before the horse is a crescent moon.

197 (style B). The same; uniform feathers. A crescent is before, a six-pointed sun-star above, left.

186 (style B). Inscription 33. The same; differentiated feathers.

Fifth century.

181 (style B). The same; uniform feathers. A six-pointed sun-star is before, a crescent above.

Publication: Osten, fig. 66.



4



119



186



197



181

102 (style B). Inscription 35. The same; differentiated feathers.

Late fifth to sixth century.

185 (style B). The same. A crescent before; two parallel strokes above, left.

175 (style C). The same. Bead border.

Publication: Osten, fig. 64.

198 (style C). The same; uniform feathers. Bead border.

221 (style D). The same.

96 (style D). The same. Above is a six-pointed sun-star.

3 bd. Two winged horses.

218 (style C). Two winged horses in right profile above a base line. Their feathers are differentiated. Above are three upright crescents followed by several faint marks. (See inscription c.)

As mentioned above (page 81), a pair of winged horses occurs in a celestial context on a Berlin Museum seal. On a silver plate in a private collection, a pair is shown in the position of pasturing or drinking, together with the tulip motif (7 b). On a plate in the Metropolitan Museum (acq. no. 63.152), they are similarly posed over a clear and appropriate water motif. The person rising from the waters is presumably Ardwīsūr, daughter of Ohrmazd, who embodies the "good waters" (Pahlavi *Āb Nyāyišn* 1). Like the horses and their attendants (perhaps identifiable with the putto, motif 1 ba), she is a celestial figure, dwelling at the star-station of the heavens (*ibid.*, 2). See Harper 1964, pp. 186–95. Two winged horses also are shown as supports for Xusraw I's throne on the ornate cup in the Bibliothèque Nationale (Ghirshman 1962, fig. 244); cf. the same on a silver plate (*Sas. Silver*, no. 15; Ghirshman 1962, fig. 245).

Publications: *MMA Hand-Book No. 12*, p. 47, no. 23. Osten, fig. 65.



102



185



175



198

3 c. The Sēn bird.

By Sasanian times, the Near Eastern and Scythian images of the griffon had apparently transformed the Iranian concept of the Sēn. In the early Iranian period the Sēn was probably a simple eagle or similar bird (= Old Indic *śyena*; for philological summary, Mayrhofer III, p. 385). On a Parthian seal (Masson, fig. 12), it is still birdlike, but it attacks like a Scythian griffon. The merging of the two probably occurred in the course of the Arsacid period. Thus, while the Sēn is termed the first of birds in the *Bundahišn*, it is also said to incorporate three genera of two families, as does the bat. Both are mammalian but, because they fly, are partly bird. Since they have teeth, they contain the dog genus of the five-digited tribe; they live in holes and so are part rat (XIII.24=Anklesaria, p. 97.2-8). The animal depicted on seals does have a dog's ears and an eagle's beak and wings; his body and postures, however, are those of a lion. Cf. the figure on a throne leg in Ghirshman 1962, fig. 255.



221



96



218

The ancient myth of the Sēn is related in *Bundahišn* XVI.4 (following *Yašt* 12.17) and in a gloss on *Yašt* 14.41 (= *Zand*, pp. 132-33). The Sēn flies to the tree-of-all seeds in the midst of the Fraxwkard Sea. It knocks the seeds into the sea; these are taken up into the clouds and rained upon the earth, where they sprout into the various plants. Thus the Sēn is a beneficent promoter of prosperity for mankind. *Dādistān ī mēnōg ī xrad* LXII.10 and 37 indicates that the Sēn builds a nest in the tree.

When the griffon and Sēn images merged, the Sēn, who is essentially pacific, must have acquired the griffon's warlike functions. Thus, although the animal of the seals is usually alone, on B.M. EG 16-17 and Leningrad 255 it attacks animals. The Iranian army possessed griffon standards; Flavius Vopiscus refers to their capture (*Persici dracones*) in his *Divus Aurelianus* XXVIII.5. Cf. those used earlier by the Dacians as depicted on the column of Trajan's Forum (L. Rossi, *Trajan's Column and the Dacian Wars* [London, 1971] p.126). The Sēn/griffon also appears as a protome on royal headgear (Göbl 1968, no. 71; Mordtmann, pl. III/116; B.M. MG 1) and as a throne support (Dalton, pl. 188).

The true dog-bird combination occurs occasionally on seals (B.M. EG 6, 20) but often in other media; it is given a peacock tail and usually placed within a medallion.

Examples from Sasanian and early post-Sasanian times include: (a) in glass: *Sas. Silver*, no. 72; (b) stucco: *SPA IV*, pl. 177 c; Thompson, pls. IV.3-4, xxiii.1; (c) silverware: *Sas. Met.*, pls. 23, 44; *SPA IV*, pl. 227; (d) textiles: *SPA IV*, pls. 199 B, 200; *Sas. Silver*, no. 65; (e) representations of textiles in relief and in painting: *Taq-i-Bustan I*, pls. XLVI-L, II, pls. XLV-XLVI; Al'baum. pls. VI, LVI.

The seals below show the Sēn's chief postures. However, he is recumbent on Berlin 840 and standing on Berlin 909, 1423, and B.M. EF 3.

3 ca. The Sēn bird: crouching.

126 (style A). Sēn in right profile, crouching. The wings are carefully depicted, in contrast to the following examples. The wing feathers are homogeneous. The brush of the tail, usually ignored or with three points, is here split into five points.

Cf. B.M. EG series; Louvre II, A.1416; *QAN D.344*, 445; *Foroughi*, pl. XLIX/158; *Gorelick* 70; ANS C.6; Göbl 1973, 67c; Aulock 230.

Publication: Osten, fig. 76.

85 (style C). The same. Three-pointed tail; differentiated feathers.

45 (style C). Same as the preceding.

Publication: Osten, fig. 75.

131 (style C). Same. Simple, upswept tail. Residual wing.

Publication: Osten, fig. 74.

145 (style D). Same, also with upswept tail.

Publication: Osten, fig. 73.

199 (style E). Same.

3 cb. The Sēn bird: sitting.

180 (style B). Sēn in right profile, sitting. Upswept tail and crudely differentiated feathers. Cf. B.M. EG 1-4, 6, 8, 10; Leningrad 229, 240; *QAN D.108*, 234-35; Berlin, pl. v, top; *Foroughi*, pl. XLIX/159; Hamburg 125; Debevoise, pl. II/1-3; Mordtmann, pl. v/83; Pirouzan 5.15, 6.6.

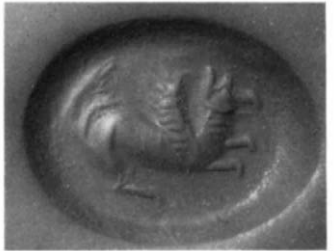
86



126



85



45



131



145



199



180



178



56

178 (style B). The same. Usual hanging tail; uniform feathers. The artisan who executed this seal had a notably poor visualization of the animal.

3 d. Stag.

The motif of the stag occurs in Iran from prehistoric (cf. Sialk pottery) to Islamic times. On Parthian seals he is depicted as an eagle's prey and an object of the hunt; a pair of stags are shown flanking a plant element in a fertility motif (cf. 3 fd, below; see Masson, figs. 6, 9, 13). All these themes are continued in Sasanian art. As a "royal" animal, the stag occurs as a decorative element on the *kulāf* of Arsacid kings (Sellwood, types 33 and 39). In Sasanian art the stag may be depicted in nature – passant, regardant on a plate in the Seattle Art Museum (*Sas. Silver*, no. 29=3 db), or drinking on a Damghan stucco fragment (*SPA IV*, pl. 176 B). Or he may be chased in royal hunt scenes depicted on silverware (*Sas. Silver*, no. 10; Ghirshman 1962, nos. 252, 254; *SPA IV*, pl. 206) and on the reliefs of Taq-i Bustan (*Taq-i-Bustan I*, pls. LXXXI ff.). On Sasanian seals he is always shown as a natural animal, never winged. Thus, as in the case of the bull, it is the literal animal that is stressed, and no mythical significance is attached. The stag's poses are, like the bull's, statant-passant and lodged. The seals leave no doubt that the cervids (*gawazn*), zoologically, were regarded as a genus of the "cloven-hoofed" (*du-kaft-pāy*) tribe. However, on a medallion decorating a ewer in the Bibliothèque Nationale (Ghirshman 1962, no. 241), the stag is placed in the horse's passant position with left fore-leg lifted.

3 da. Stag: standing.

56 (style C). Stag in right profile, standing. Before it is a three-branched plant element, above, left, a six-pointed sun-star. Cf. B.M. FC series; Leningrad 655, 667; Louvre I, D.290, II, A.1332, 1333 (pair); Berlin 1214, 1217; *Foroughi*, pl. LI/177; Hamburg 106; *QAN D.*187, 214 (left profile), 217, 297, 418, 454; *Gorelick* 76–77 (pair); ANS C.3; Debevoise, pl. 1/15; Göbl 1973, 151b.

Publication: Osten, fig. 31.

208 (style D). The same. Crude representations or ribbons at his neck. An excavation find from Nishapur.

63 (style E). The same.

Publication: Osten, fig. 30.

213 (style E). The same.

Publication: Osten, fig. 29.

3 db. Stag: standing, regardant.

99 (style B). Stag in right profile, standing or walking, regardant. Ribbons float from his neck. Cf. *QAN* D.33; Louvre I, D.291-94, II, A.1334-35.

Publications: *Handbook*, p. 449. Osten, fig. 40.

3 dc. Stag: lodged.

216 (style B). Stag in right profile, lodged. Before him, a single-branched leafy plant. Above, left, a crescent moon. Cf. B.M. FB series; Louvre II, A.1323-29; *QAN* D.290, 293-94; *Gorelick* 73; Berlin 1189, 1191, 1196, 1198, 1207, 1221 (pair); *Newell* 574; Mordtmann, pl. III/148; Pirouzan 4.26 (two, mutually inverted).

Publication: Osten, fig. 38.

112 (style B). The same. To right, a thick, three-branched plant.

109 (style C). The same. Bead border.

108 (style C). The same. To right, a crescent moon. Above, left, a six-pointed sun-star.

Publication: Osten, fig. 32.

70 (style C). The same. Bead border.

Publication: Osten, fig. 37.

169 (style D). The same. Bead border.

Publication: Osten, fig. 36.

149 (style D). The same.

Publication: Osten, fig. 34.

176 (style D). The same.

Publication: Osten, fig. 33.



208



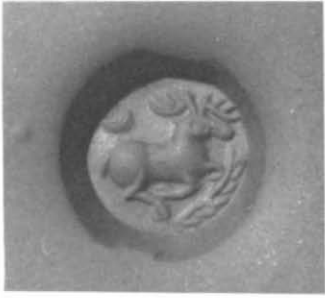
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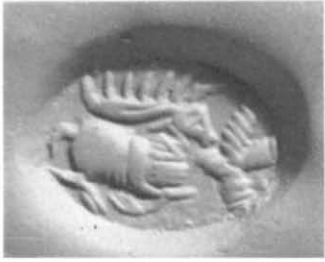
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216



70



112



169



109



149



108



176

3 dd. Stag: lodged, regardant.

88 (style B). Stag in right profile, lodged and regardant. Ribbons float from his neck. Cf. B.M. FA series; Leningrad 675; Louvre I, D.195 (pair) to 197, II, A.1330-31, 1336-37; *QAN* D.263; Berlin 1211, 862, 911; ANS B.13, D.1; Hamburg 105 (with bird); Stockholm, 26-27; *Aulock* 219; *Newell* 572-73; Göbl 1973, 51a; Pirouzan 6.12.



129 (style B). The same. Also with ribbons. Above, left, is a five-pointed sun-star.



79 (style B). The same. Also with ribbons. Above, left, a twelve-pointed sun-star. Bead border.

188 (style C). The same; with ribbons. Bead border.
Publication: Osten, fig. 39.

3 de. Stag: head.

26 (style B). Stag's head in right profile couped but with antlers shown frontally. The head rests in a base of two wings, with tips pointed downward, tied with two ribbons. This style of wing base is unusual but remains simply a variant of the ornamental device found with human, animal, plant, and inanimate subjects. It by no means implies that the animal is thought of as winged. The seal is a find from Nishapur, Cf., with the usual upswept wings: B.M. FD series; Leningrad 674; Hamburg 129; Louvre II, A.1405-06; ANS C.5; *Gorelick* 74-75; *Morgan* 318; Debevoise, pl. 1/14; Göbl 1973, 51q. See also *Foroughi*, pl. 1/171 (couped, no base) and 172 (caboched, gardant).

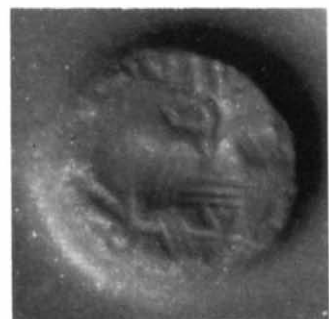


Publication: Lerner, pl. II/7.

3 e. Elephant.

30 (style A). Inscription 9. Elephant head in right profile couped.

The Indian elephant was familiar in Iran from Seleucid and Arsacid times as an instrument of war. Thus the *Ayyādgār ī Zarērān*, reflecting pre-Sasanian traditions, refers to an elephant corps in its description of the Iranian army (sec. 67). It was established early as a "royal" animal, appearing on a coin of Mithridates I (Sellwood, type 12/5).





26

The elephant is referred to as a mount of royalty in *Kārnamag ī Ardašīr ī Pābagān* I.9, and of the heroes Rostam and Spanddād in *Draxt ī Asurīg* 72. Elephants appear in the royal hunt scenes at Taq-i Bustan (*Taq-i-Bustan* I, pls. 32–43) and on a silver plate (*Sas. Silver*, no. 4). The “elephant” (bishop) of the game of chess is appropriately compared to the commander of the royal bodyguard (*puštibānānsālār*) in *Mādiyān ī wizārišn ī čatrang*, p. 116.12. The epithet “(mighty) as an elephant” (*pīlōmand*), applied to a bull in *Dēnkard* VII.3.12 (= Madan II, p. 616.2) indicates the existence of heroic terminology such as abounds in the *Šāhnāma*: elephant-bodied, elephant-armed, elephant-toothed, elephant-figured, of elephant strength, elephant-slayer, elephant-seizer.

The elephant occurs on a possibly Parthian seal: Stockholm 34. On Sasanian seals, cf. Leningrad 755; B.M. EB 1–2; Berlin 1322; Louvre I, D.198; Geneva 95; *Foroughi*, pl. LIII/198–99 and 200 (with a human head added on its back). These are full profiles; a seal in Munich (Göbl 1973, 46c) shows a head coupéd. These depictions compare closely with those of the reliefs and with the carved figure published by E. Herzfeld, “Ein sasanidischer Elefant,” *AMI* 3 (1931) pp. 26–28. Cf. the textile medallion depicted in Al’baum, pls. xxiii, xxvi.

Fourth century.

Publications: King 1866, p. 108, no. 5. King 1872, II, pl. iv/4. *MMA Hand-Book No. 9*, p. 33, no. 17. King 1885, pl. viii/7. Osten, fig. 51. *SPA* I, p. 808, fig. 281, f. Göbl 1973, 46c².

3 f. Ram.



30

The ram in Sasanian art typifies the *oves*, who, together with cattle, are the most important of the grazing family. According to the *Bundahišn*, there are five species of the genus sheep within the cloven-hoofed tribe (XIII.13). In accord with the beneficence and economic importance of sheep, the religious law enjoined their proper treatment; see the summary of the *Stōristān* sections of the Avesta given in *Dēnkard* VIII.24. The sacrifice of sheep was referred to under motif 1 db; this might occur on important festivals or in commemoration of the dead.

The ram also had royal significance. In the *Kārnamag ī Ardašīr ī Pābagān* it represents the royal fortune (*xwarrah*) that invests itself on Ardašīr; and the *Šāhnāma* employs

similar imagery. The Sasanian Kušānšāh Wahrām incorporated ram's horns into his crown (*CII Kushan*, pl. VII/2), which also appears on a silver plate in a hunt scene (*Sas. Met.*, pl. 4). Šāpūr II apparently wore a similar head-dress as a war crown (Ammianus Marcellinus XIX.13). It is thus appropriate that the ram is often depicted on silverware as an object of royal hunts (*Sas. Met.*, pl. 5; *Sas. Silver*, nos. 2, 7; Ghirshman 1962, figs. 245, 247, 252). Thrones decorated with ram heads figure in the *Šāhnāma* as a gift made to Rustam and as a seat for nobles at the court of Xusraw II (I, p. 566.964; VII, p. 312.370i ff.). The ribbons that adorn the ram so often, especially in motif 3 fa, as they do the horse and sometimes the stag, presumably indicate his royal status.

Mythic occurrences of the ram are sparse. The effect of the first human couple's consumption of a sheep was of rather ambiguous benefit (*Bundahišn* XIV.21). The beneficence of sheep is better illustrated by the ewe that Srōš and Wahman brought to nurse the infant Zardušt in the wolf's den (*Dēnkard* VII.3.17). The ram is also the eighth form taken by the god Wahrām (*Yašt* 14.23). Astrologically, the sign Aries was quite auspicious. It was the house of the sun's exaltation, and the sun's entrance into it signified the beginning of spring and of the year. Its lunar mansions, being "watery", gave prosperity.

3 fa. Ram: standing.

160 (style A). Inscription 39. A ram in right profile with horns shown frontally, standing or walking. The motif is popular. Cf. on silverware: *Sas. Silver*, no. 41. On textiles (*SPA* IV, pl. 202 A/Ghirshman 1962, figs. 273, 277) and depictions of textiles (Al'baum, pls. xxx, LIV). On seals: B.M. EP series; Leningrad 337, 339, 343, 387; Louvre I, D.186; Berlin 1235; Geneva 101; Hamburg 113; *Foroughi*, pl. I/174; ANS B.3, B.9; *QAN* D.34, 62–66, 205, 220, 224, 246–48, 250–51, 343, 389; Mordtmann, pls. II/149, III/87; Yale 6, 4492, 4498; Pirouzan 5.16.

Sixth century.

Publications: Osten, fig. 72. Göbl 1973, 55b¹.

3 fb. Ram: lodged.

117 (style B). Inscription 8. A ram in right profile, lodged.



To right is a three-branched plant. Cf. a stucco medallion from Ctesiphon (Erdmann, no. 42). On seals: B.M. EQ series; Leningrad 347; Louvre I, D.185, II, A.1306-07; Berlin 1227; ANS D.9, B.11; *Gorelick* 78-79; *Morgan* 577; *Newell* 575-77; Stockholm 24 (?)–25; Debevoise, pl. II/14; *QAN* D.295; Hamburg 112; *Foroughi*, pl. LI/176. Fourth century.

Publication: Osten, fig. 71.



54 (style C). The same. Above, left, a four-pointed sunstar.

3 fc. Two rams: lodged.

82 (style C). Two rams in profile, lodged respecting one another, the one on the right regardant. Cf. the two facing rams of Louvre I, D.187; Geneva 108; and B.M. ES 4. When two rams are shown standing, they may be in a row (B.M. ES 5), facing (*Gorelick* 80), or with the right-hand one regardant (Louvre II, A.1309; Leningrad 397, 401; Hamburg 114).

Publications: Osten, fig. 52. Göbl 1973, 55e³.



3 fd. Two rams, lodged, with date palm.

65 (style B). Inscription h. Two rams lodged addorsed, regardant. Between them is a date palm with its crown shown in three sections. Cf. Louvre II, A.1394, Geneva 109 (both standing), B.M. ES 3 (lodge). On Berlin 2045 the two are standing addorsed. On a bulla from Ak-Depe (Ak-Depe, p. 106) they stand respecting one another with the one on the right regardant. The motif well illustrates the theme of animal and vegetable prosperity. Cf. the variants Berlin 1221 (two lodge stags and a general plant element); Leningrad 408; *Foroughi*, pl. LI/179; B.M. ES 1 (goat and ram with palm tree). The stag variant is already Parthian (Masson, no. 13). On a silver plate (*SPA* IV, pl. 232 A), the scene with rams is embellished by adding a snake in the tree. Somewhat further removed is a stucco plaque with two goats clymant by a grapevine (Erdmann, no. 38). For the general theme, one may compare the Parthian poem *Draxt ī Asurīg*, in which a goat and a date palm debate their relative usefulness to mankind. This text and Strabo's reference (*Geography* XVI.1.14) to a "Persian song" in which the many uses of the palm tree



were recorded may indicate the existence of an entire genre in western Iranian oral literature adopted from Near Eastern folk culture.

Fifth century.

27 (style B). Similar, but the rams are lodged respecting one another. Above, left and right, are a crescent and a six-pointed sun-star. Cf. B.M. ES 3; Leningrad 395; *Foroughi*, pl. L/173; and Geneva 109 (standing).

3 fe. Ram: head.

53 (style C). Ram head caboched on a base of a pair of wings. Such representations seem to belong to the early fourth century. Cf. B.M. EO 6 (bull head) and Louvre II, A.1410 (ram-horned lion). These wings occur with a coupéd ram's head on Louvre I, D.233. Caboched heads without base occur on *QAN* D.296 and Mordtmann, pl. II/143; both are late Sasanian.

50 (style C). Ram head coupéd, turned to right, issuing from a wing base. The wings have a short base line; they show a slight indication of the covert feathers. For this popular version of the motif, cf. a stucco block (*Sas. Silver*, no. 70). On seals: B.M. ER series and FG 7; Leningrad 394; Berlin 1383–84, 858; Louvre I, D.233, II, A.1402–04; *Foroughi*, pl. LIV/208 (toward left); Birmingham 76. Cf., without wings, B.M. ER 7, Leningrad 353, Pirouzan 4.25, Berlin 1385, and Louvre II, A.1401. (Similar is 3 jb/10, below.)

Publications: Osten, fig. 41. Göbl 1973, 55o².

48 (style C). The same, but with wings tied at the bottom with ribbons. Above is a crescent moon.

38 (style C). The same. The wings, which are close to the fernlike pattern, have neither ribbons nor base line. Above, left and right, a crescent and a six-pointed sun-star.

3 g. Lion.

In Zoroastrianism the lion, like the wolf, was condemned as one of the creations of Ahreman (e.g. *Dēnkard* VII.8.45). This does not interfere, however, with the animal's royal status and heroic significance. Thus the Parthian graffito



of Tang-i Sarvak shows the satrap Gari-Ardašir in the ancient lion-strangling pose (*JRAS* 1953, pp. 132–36); later in the third century, Wahrām II is shown at Sar Mashad demonstrating his prowess; on foot, he slays a lion in the presence of the court (cf. L. Trümpelmann, *Iranische Denkmäler* 5 [Berlin, 1975]). Various silver vessels depict kings hunting lions from horseback or on foot (*Sas. Met.*, pl. 6; *Sas. Silver*, no. 4; Ghirshman 1962, fig. 248 ff.); see also a British Museum terracotta plaque: Ghirshman 1962, fig. 122. The lion's royalty is also stressed by its use as a protome for a princely crown, on Wahrām II's Naqsh-i Rostam relief (Hinz, pl. 120), and for contemporary Kushano-Sasanian crowns (*CII Kushan*, pls. VIII–X). In the *Šāhnāma* "lion" and "lion-man" are conventional terms for great warriors; e.g., "they are all lion-men and heroes and knights" (II, p. 604.542).

The lion occurs frequently on seals and is evidently auspicious (see also 1 ac, above). Although the animal is not given mythic or astrological significance in Zoroastrianism, the image is not infrequently winged; and this feature suggests an astral symbolism. It is noted on textile representations at Afrasiab in Sasanian style (Al'baum, pls. VI, XVIII, XX–XXI). The lion's variant forms on seals are suggestive: (a) Winged lion passant (B.M. DG 1). (b) The forequarters of one winged lion (B.M. DG 2, 4; *SPA* IV, pl. 256 f; *QAN* D.442; Mordtmann, pls. III/94, IV/34) or those of three, joined into a triskele (B.M. DG 3). (c) Winged lion-fish (Berlin 1185). (d) Lion with encircling snake (B.M. DH 4, DL 2; cf. DL 1). (e) Lion mask with two winged horses (B.M. DM 1).

The lion and snake combination recalls the imagery of the Mithraic deity who is generally regarded as Kronos/Zurwān, god of time. If the snake, as *ouroboros drakōn*, indicates the revolving of the heavens (B.M., p. 26), the lion may represent the sun, who is a measurer of time more proximate to mankind. The combination of lion mask and winged horses especially suggests a solar significance. Cf. a ewer in the Bibliothèque Nationale on which two rampant lions are crossed (in the pattern of motif 3 bb) and bear sun-stars on their shoulders (Ghirshman 1962, fig. 404). Cf. also the Berlin "Xwar" seal (see motif 3 b) and *Foroughi*, pl. XLVIII/156. Juxtaposition of the lion mask with a boucranium (B.M. DM 2), in view of the strong association of cattle with the moon, could be another way of representing the two major heavenly bodies; while motif



48

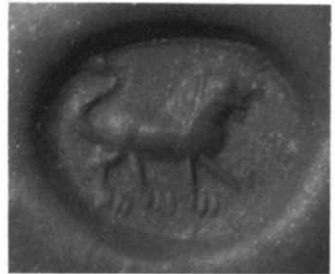


38

9 c is more literal. In the following seals, therefore, it seems possible to see a range of meaning from the literal to the astrological. A possible eschatological significance should not be overlooked, for the sun will give distinct signs of the approaching end of measured time (*Dēnkard* III.160 and 407=Madan, pp. 173–74 and 390–92).

3 ga. Lion: walking.

183 (style B). Lion in right profile, walking. The passant and statant positions occur abundantly. Cf. a bronze depiction, in left profile, from Bard-i Nishande (Ghirshman 1976, II, pl. xxxviii/5). On Sasanian seals: B.M. DB–DE, DH 2, 4, DL 2; Leningrad 306, 308, 320; Louvre I, D.218–19, 221, 235, II, A.1380–85, 1387; Berlin, pl. II/rows 3–5; *Aulock* 224; Pirouzan 4.8, 5.13; *Foroughi*, pls. LII/190, LIII/194; Hamburg 107 (roaring), 110 (with scorpion and eagle); ANS C.1; Stockholm 30; *QAN* D.69, 121, 159–61, 166, 171, 176, 181, 416, 430; Mordtmann, pls. I/30, II/73, III/132, 147, IV/35, 96, 112, VI/XI. A lion is shown nursing a cub on Louvre II, A.1395; *Foroughi*, pl. LII/192; *QAN* D.32, 304, 309; Mordtmann, pl. II/136.



113 (style C). The same. The image is less precise but does appear to be a lion rather than a tiger. The latter is theoretically possible, given its occurrence on silver vessels (*Sas. Met.*, pl. 7; *Sas. Silver*, no. 28).

Publication: Osten, fig. 77.



3 gb. Lion: sitting.

5 (style B). Inscription 36. A lion sitting (sejant), gardant. Cf., gardant: *QAN* D.245; B.M. DL 1; *Foroughi*, pl. LII/193; with head in profile: Louvre I, D.220; Stockholm 31. On Geneva 96 the lion reaches back to lick its haunch. It is uncertain whether the lion ever represents the constellation Leo as a birth sign, since the full range of zodiacal symbols does not occur on Sasanian seals. Nevertheless, cf. the lion sejant gardant with a Roman depiction of the sign Leo (Berlin 553 in *Antike Gemmen . . . II* (Munich, 1969).

Fifth century.

Publication: Osten, fig. 79.



3 gc. Lion: sleeping.



168 (style B). Inscription 32. Lion sleeping (dormant). For this position, cf. B.M. DA series, DH 1, 3; Leningrad 309–11; Louvre I, D.222–25, II, A.1378–79; Berlin, pl. II/row 5; *Foroughi*, pls. LII/188, LIII /195–96; ANS D.7; *Gorelick* 65; Hamburg 108; Mordtmann, pl. II/16; *QAN* D.10, 27 (facing left), 37, 50, 54, 154, 156–57, 162–65, 167, 172 (facing left), 174–75, 182–83, 249, 320, 355, 397 (facing left); *Aulock* 227; Pirouzan 4.6–7, 6.2. As a variant, the lion is sometimes simply recumbent: *QAN* D.299 (and (31?); Mordtmann, pl. III/79; cf. Stockholm 32 (Parthian?).

Fifth century.

Publication: Osten, fig. 80.



16 (style B). The same. Above, left, a crescent.

Publication: Osten, fig. 81.



190 (style B). The same. Above left, a scorpion. Cf. B.M. DH series for the scorpion as a submotif. Its relationship to the lion as an astral symbol is unclear; the sign Scorpio is given little importance in Zoroastrian astrology. Perhaps it should be taken, as in motif 2 e, as an earth symbol.

Publication: Osten, fig. 78.

3 gd. Lion: mask.



179 (style A). A lion mask within a wreath, tied at the bottom. The motif is adopted from Roman art, and the artisan of this seal could well have been Roman. Cf. a medallion in the Piazza Armerina mosaic (L'Orange, pl. 32b) and on Roman seals: *Clercq*, pl. xxvi/3211; Hamburg 1229 (where it is pierced by a lance). Cf. a Sasanian phalera made like a medallion with a border of round beads: *Sas. Silver*, no. 46. On seals: Berlin 1370 (with rope-pattern border), 1372–74 (with sun and moon symbols); *Newell* 588 (the mask alone); Louvre I, D.234 (unclear); B.M. DM 3 (alone); *Foroughi*, pl. LII/189 (with large sun-star); Hannover 1728 (lion and lioness masks); B.M. DL 2 (with wing base) and DM 1–2 (complex motifs referred to above); Mordtmann, pl. I/56 (alone) and 145 (with eagle). The *Foroughi* seal gives notable support to the interpretation of the lion as sun, for the sun-star there is of equal value in the motif, not accessory to it. A variation is Leningrad 296, a ram-horned mask in wing base.

Occasional three-quarter views of the lion head occur: Hamburg 101, Leningrad 313; cf. the Roman seal *Clercq*, pl. xxvi/3260. A head in right profile coupé occurs on B.M. GI 1 and *QAN* D.135. Unusual is *QAN* D.301, where apparently a sitting lion is shown frontally.

3 h. Lion attacking prey.

The motif of a lion attacking another animal, so familiar in Achaemenid art as the lion-bull combat, appears often on Sasanian seals. It seems intended as a scene from nature and an illustration of the lion's might; however a sun and moon symbolism might also be suggested in the case of motif 3 ha. On silver vessels, cf. scenes of a lion preying on a bull (*Sas. Met.*, pl. 30) or on a deer (*SPA* IV, pl. 220). On seals the lion tends to attack a bull or an antelope, sometimes a stag, rarely a ram, and exceptionally a winged horse. Four types of juxtaposition are observed. They are defined here, taking as the basic form of each the version with the lion in right profile; the version with the lion in left profile is called the reverse: (1) The lion attacks above the head or back of the prey, which faces him. (2) The lion attacks from above; the prey is upside down relative to him and facing the opposite way. (3) The lion attacks from behind the prey. (4) The animals are both facing the same direction but with the prey upside down.

A comprehensive summary of the submotifs follows. *3 ha, with bull*. Position 1: B.M. DJ 1, 3, 6; Louvre II, A.1399; Berlin 1347; *Newell* 595; Mordtmann, pl. III/20. Position 1 reversed: MMA 182, 84; B.M. DJ 2; Leningrad 741; Louvre I, D.231 (unclear); Berlin 904, 1343; *Newell* 592; Göbl 1973, 78c. Position 2: B.M. DJ 5 and MMA 220. Position 3: B.M. DJ 4; MMA 187; Hamburg 116; Berlin 1344; Göbl 1973, 78c. An innovative seal, *Foroughi*, pl. LII/185, shows the foreparts of a lion and lioness attacking a bull's head from either side. *3 hb, with antelope*. Position 1: Louvre II, A.1396. Position 2: MMA 2; *Newell* 591. Position 3: Louvre II, A.1393, 1398; Göbl 1973, 78g. Position 4: B.M. DK 2; Louvre II, A.1392 (reversed); Berlin 1349; Geneva 107; Hamburg 115; *Foroughi*, pl. LII/191. *3 hc, with ram*. Position 3: MMA 94 (reversed) and Berlin 1350. *With stag*. Position 3: B.M. DK 1; Berlin 1346; *Foroughi*, pl. LII/186. Position 4: Berlin 1346;





Foroughi, pl. LII/187; Mordtmann, pl. IV/159. *With winged horse*: Leningrad 737, position 2 reversed.

3 ha. Lion attacking bull.

182 (style B). Lion attacking lodged bull in position 1 reversed. Above is a six-pointed sun-star, to left, a crescent. The depiction is not unambiguously an attack. One might think of a simple juxtaposition of sun and moon symbols.



84 (style C). The same, with the lion obviously springing. Residual bead border.

220 (style C). Lion attacking bull in position 2.
Publication: Osten, fig. 53.

187 (style B). Inscription a. Lion attacking bull in position 3.

3 hb. Lion attacking antelope.

2 (style B). Inscription b. Lion attacking antelope in position 2.

Publications: *MMA Hand-Book No. 9*, p. 34, no. 23. Osten fig. 55. Göbl 1973, 78b.



3 hc. Lion attacking ram.

94 (style D). Lion attacking ram in position 3 reversed.
Publication: Osten, fig. 54.

3 i. Goat

Goats were naturally closely associated with sheep in the Iranian mind and presumably in the Sasanian economy. *Bundahišn* XIII.12 lists five species of this genus of the cloven-hoofed tribe. They include the domestic goat (*buz*) and ibex (*pāzen*), but also the antelope (*xarbuž*) and, as the text stands, the ram (*warrag*). The occurrence of ram and goat together on seals has already been noted in 3 fd. The images of the two are often very similar; on seals the normal position of the ibex is lodged or standing/running.



On silverware, cf. ibexes running before the pursuing king (Lukonin 1967, II, pl. 201) or lodged (*SPA* IV, pls. 207 A, 219 B). As mentioned, the usefulness of the goat is the chief theme of the text *Draxt ī Asurīg*. It figures little in mythology; it was a goat, however, whose milk was the first food of the first human couple (*Bundahišn* XIV.18). The *Šāhnāma* calls a tribe of Māzandarān the “goat-eared” (Buzgōš); for a similar characterisation of peoples in the northeast, cf. the “dog-headed” Warčašm mentioned in *Draxt ī Asurīg* 91–92.

For the goat on seals, cf. B.M. FG series; Leningrad 365, 370; Berlin 853, 1311, 1315, 1319; Louvre II, A.1322; *Gorelick* 81; ANS B.15; Stockholm 22: *QAN* D.429.

200 (style B). Goat in right profile, lodged. To right, a crescent.

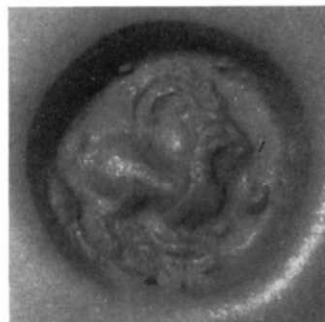
Publication: Osten, fig. 68.

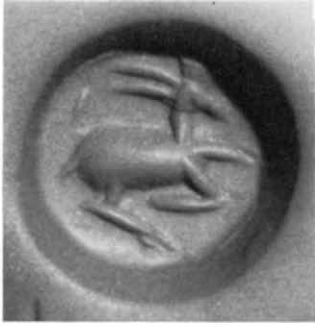
150 (style C). The same.

Publications: *MMA Hand-Book No. 12*, p. 46, no. 5. Osten, fig. 70. Göbl 1973, 52a⁴.

3 j. Antelope.

The antelope species of the goat genus (in the Zoroastrian system) is a popular animal in hunt scenes. On silverware the king may pursue antelope alone (*Sas. Silver*, no. 3; *Sas. Met.*, pls. 11–12) or mingled with other animals: with rams (*Sas. Silver*, no. 7), rams and boars (Ghirshman 1962, fig. 247). Cf. a hunting scene on a Bibliothèque Nationale seal (*SPA* IV, pl. 256 D), where it occurs with a ram and a stag. It is found on silverware with other animals (*Sas. Met.*, pls. 36–38). Appreciation of the animal is further indicated by the Metropolitan Museum’s antelope-head rhyton (*Sas. Silver*, no. 48) and an antelope-shaped container (*ibid.*, no. 49). The rendering of the antelope on seals is usually late and stylized (with notable exceptions in *Foroughi*, pl. L/175, and Pirouzan 3.4 and 4.19). Often it is not easily distinguishable from the goat. Probable occurrences are: B.M. FH series; Louvre I, D.188, II, A.1302, 1316–21; Berlin 1305, 1315; Hamburg 98; *QAN* D.288–89, 291, 305, 431; ANS A.1.2; Geneva 112; Hoernle 40, 45; Debevoise, pl. II/6; Stockholm 24; Göbl 1973, 52a. A pair of antelope occur on: B.M. FJ series; Leningrad 416 (inverse to one another); Berlin 925 (inverse, pointing in the





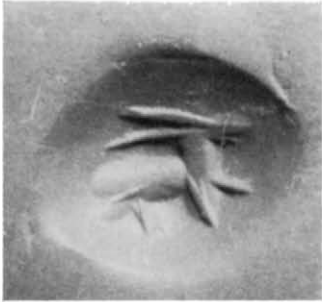
same direction), 1315, 1319, 1323; Hamburg 99; *Newell* 591 (inverse, opposite directions); Göbl 1973, 521. An antelope and ram are depicted together on Louvre I, D.227–28 and Stockholm 53, while antelope and ram foreparts are joined on Leningrad 381 and Geneva 111.

3 ja. Antelope: running.

89 (style C). Antelope in right profile, running.

209 (style C). The same. One bead occurs in the upper left margin. A find from Qasr-i Abu Nasr.

Publication: *QAN*, p. 39 and pl. iv/14.



28 (style D). The same. Also from Qasr-i Abu Nasr.

Publication: *QAN*, p. 39 and pl. iv/17.

143 (style D). The same. The seal may be Parthian, whether of the Arsacid or Sasanian period.

3 jb. Antelope: head.

10 (style C). Antelope head coupé, turned to right, terminating in two ribbons. Cf. B.M. ER 7; Debevoise, pl. 1/13 (with ribbons); Pirouzan 4.24; Berlin 842 (simple bust). Other animal busts with ribbons include the ram (Berlin 858, 1384) and stag (*Morgan* 318).

Publications: *MMA Hand-Book No. 9*, p. 34, no. 27. Osten, fig. 69. Göbl 1973; 52q.



3 k. Bear.

The bear presents a further example of an animal esteemed as game, although he is assigned an evil origin by Zoroastrianism. The religion explains the quasi-human character of the bear by making him the offspring of the mythical king Jam and a she-demon (*Bundahišn* XIV B=Anklesaria, p. 108.8–12). He occurs on silverware (e.g., a bowl in the Metropolitan Museum, Brunner, fig. 7, and another in Copenhagen, *Dauids fond og samling* [Copenhagen, 1970], no. 1), and on stucco panels from Ctesiphon. The Berlin panel (Ghirshman 1962, fig. 239b) presumably belonged to a hunt scene similar to one in Turin (Invernizzi, pl. xxxvi/206). Cf. the variegated hunt scene on plates in Berlin (Erdmann, no. 65) and Leningrad (*Sas. Met.*, pl. 35).



3 ka. Bear: walking.

43 (style D). A bear in right profile, walking. The animal is represented as heavily furred, with short tail and distinctive humped shoulder. Cf. B.M. FK series; Leningrad 749; Berlin 1394, 1369, 2158; Louvre II, A.1347-48 and possibly 1352-53; *Foroughi*, pl. LIII/197; *Morgan* 556; Hamburg 100; Kassel 216; *QAN* D.449; Mordtmann, pls. I/115, III/62, IV/105, V/24.



92 (style D). The same. The animal is somewhat elongated but still recognizable.

3 kb. Bear: head.

211 (style A). Bear's head turned to right, coupé. Cf. B.M. GC 1-2; Hamburg 102; *QAN* D.131, 258, 298, 303; *Aulock* 228; Göbl 1973, 82c; *Foroughi*, pl. LIV/203; Pirouzan 5.14. This motif has sometimes been confused with the popular boar medallion: see the Damgham stucco panel (Ghirshman 1962, fig. 239a); the Chahar Tarkhan panel; the ceiling of "sanctuary D" at Bamiyan (Hackin, pls. x, LXXXIV); painted representations of textiles at Toyoq Mazar (Herzfeld, pl. LXIV) and Afrasiab (Al'baum, pls. VI, XVI); a textile fragment in the Delhi museum (Erdmann, pl. 96). These representations of coupé boar heads always show the tusks. The bear head, on seals, also may be placed within a bead border (B.M. GC 1, *QAN* D.131) and has an elongated snout similar to the boar's. But, apart from the absence of tusks, it may sometimes be identified by its rounder ears. A triskele of bear heads occurs on *Foroughi*, pl. LIV/206.



3 l. Dog.

201 (style E). Dog in right profile. The scanty definition of the animal agrees most closely with the form of a dog.

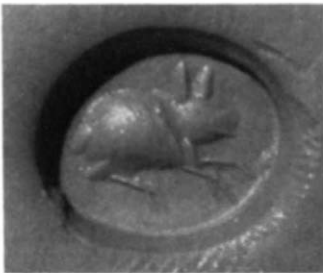
Publications: Osten, fig. 19. Göbl 1973, 39a².

The dog is found rather sparsely in Sasanian art. He occurs in seal motif 2 d, apparently as the primal dog/Gayōmard's companion/Canis Major, and in 2 e, presumably in the same character and perhaps representing beneficent animals generally. It is probably this same mythic dog who is represented on *Gorelick* 82 as winged and sitting on his haunches. Cf., in Indian mythology, the



“astral dogs” (*dīvyáu svānu*) belonging to King Yama (Miller, pp. 55–56; B. Schlerath, “Der Hund bei den Indogermanen,” *Paideuma* 6 (1954), pp. 28–29). Dogs also seem to be depicted on B.M. EK 1–2, Berlin 1341, and *QAN* D.390, 410. But these are not easily distinguished from the foxes or fennecs shown on Berlin 1303, *QAN* D.302, and B.M. DZ 1. A comparatively naturalistic dog is shown chasing an antelope and a hare on Pirouzan 3.4; cf. a dog accompanying the king hunting on a Hermitage silver plate (Lukonin 1967, pl. 201). On other vessels, the dog regularly figures in the festive (“Dionysiac”) scenes referred to under 1 bb. When the grapevine motif is used, both the dog (*Sas. Silver*, no. 41; the David bowl cited under motif 3 k) and the marauding fox (Lukonin 1967, pl. 195) may be found. Perhaps the dog occurs so seldom as a principal motif because some cultural prejudice against it – which Islam would fully establish – had already penetrated Iran.

The genus “dog” of the five-digitated tribe includes three species of dog proper (for house, flocks, and herds), as well as the fox, squirrel, porcupine, etc. (*Bundahišn* XIII.18). The primal dog was created out of the star station, near Ursa Major; but on earth the dog is man’s ally and a protector of cattle against marauding wolves and lions. The wolf, indeed, is a work of Ahreman fashioned in imitation of the dog. The partnership between man and dog is expressed in a folk etymology of the word *sag* (“dog”) as *se-ēk* “one-third [of a man]” (*Bundahišn* V.3, XIII.28, XXIV.38). Injunctions as to the treatment of dogs were given in the *Pašūšhaurwastān* and *Stōristān* sections of the Avesta (*Dēnkard* VIII.23–24). The dog had long possessed ritual functions. He was indispensable in the funeral ceremonies (*Šāyast nē šāyast* II.1–4), and he exorcised the paths over which corpses had been carried (*Vendidad* VIII.16–18). The dog is appropriately termed an assistant to Srōš, who assists the dead and guards the living during the night (*Vendidad* XVII.3, *Bundahišn* XXIV.49–50). The dog and his co-worker, the cock, appear together on *Morgan* 321.



3 m. Hare.

35 (style D). Hare in right profile, crouching. The seal is a find from Qasr-i Abu Nasr. According to a rule given in *Šāyast nē šāyast* X.9, the hare was not to be killed. It is an

auspicious animal, and the first of hares is termed the “chief” (*rad*) of the “wide-ranging” (*fraxw-raftār*) wild animals (*Bundahišn* 17.10=Anklesaria, p. 120.15–121.2). The hare appears occasionally among animals on silver vessels, e.g., in the upper band of decoration on the Zarg-veshi cup (Lukonin 1969, p. 136, fig. 22a). A bronze figure of a hare is in the Hermitage (*Sas. Met.*, pl. 85). Cf., on seals: B.M. GD series and KB 1; *SPA* IV, pl. 256 NN; Louvre I, D.178, II, A.1355; Leningrad 783; Berlin 1328, 1330, 1335, 1337; Hoernle 46; *QAN* D.23, 192, 237; Pirouzan 4.22.

Publication: *QAN*, p. 39 and pl. iv/10.

4. ANIMALS: BIRDS.

4 a. Eagle.

In Zoroastrianism birds compose the second family of animal life. “Birds are altogether clever,” according to the *Bundahišn* (XXIV.33). In harmony with this statement, the flights of birds were studied by augurs (*murwīšān*; see *Kārnāmag ī Ardašīr ī Pābagān* III.7). Like all creations of Ohrmazd, they have the function of opposing the “vermin” (*xrafstar*) creations of Ahreman. The 110 species of birds are said to be classed in eight genera, but the latter are not defined. Of eagle-related birds, the “white hawk” and the vulture are mentioned in the *Bundahišn* (XXIV.34, 46). The latter is depicted on a seal, together with an eagle, perched on a bull (Gorelick 86); this is an alternative to two eagles (Leningrad 601). The mythical Čamrūš, Karšift, and Ašōzūšt birds may have been visualized with an eagle’s features. More important, however, is the *vārəyna* bird (cf. Sogdian *wārayni*, “hawk/falcon”); it is the seventh form of the god Wahrām and contains a magic potency, so that its bones and feathers may be used as amulets (*Yašt* 14.19, 35–38). When King Yima’s Fortune (*xwarrah*) departed from him, it took the form of a *vārəyna* (*Yašt* 19.35–38). Thus the family *Falconidae* already possessed royal implications in ancient Iranian tradition, and these were reinforced by Near Eastern, Scythian, and then Roman art. For simplicity’s sake, the term “eagle” is here used throughout.

In Sasanian art the eagle generally takes one of four positions: displayed (4 aa), with wings displayed (4 ab), with wings addorsed (4 ac), and close. Cf., however,

Louvre I, D.179 and II, A.1300b, where an eagle or vulture dips its wing. An eagle (in motif 4 b) occurs already on Parthian seals. On a coin of Phraates III (ca. 70–57 B.C.) and of a later Arsacid, the king is depicted holding a falcon on his wrist. An eagle, close or with wings addorsed, is a motif of his successor, Orodes II. An eagle grasping a ring appears displayed on coinage of Pacorus II (ca. A.D. 78–105) and with wings addorsed on an issue of Vologeses IV (late second century); see Sellwood, types 39/1, 47/27, 48/16, 67/3, 77/9, 84/102). An eagle with wings displayed is shown on the *kulāf* of Ardašīr I, and it apparently holds diadem ribbons in its beak. This and the previous example seem to illustrate the *vārəyna-xwarrah* association, which would motivate the use of an eagle protome for the crown-prince headdress of Šāpūr I and (presumably) Wahrām III (Göbl 1968, nos. 18, 34, 59, 64). Eagle wings figure in the crowns of Wahrām II and of the kings from Wahrām IV on; Hormizd II's crown incorporates the eagle's head as well. At Taq-i Bustan (*Taq-i-Bustan* I, pl. LXXXIX), the king's trousers are adorned with eagles close.



4 aa. Eagle: displayed.

97 (style B). Eagle displayed; on its chest it bears rudimentary, quasi-human features. For the latter feature, cf. the fantastic, multi-faced eagle of *Foroughi*, pl. XLVII/132. The “eared” head recalls a displayed eagle on a Hermitage silver plate (Lukonin 1967, pl. 195), where the bird grasps, and is tended by, a nude woman, while two nude hunters pursue it. That eagle, and perhaps the one on this seal, may represent one of the mythical birds mentioned above or some other, unknown one. The mythic context of the Hermitage plate is unknown.



Displayed eagles form the supports for a royal throne on one silver plate (*Sas. Silver*, no. 16), have been noted on bronze rings (Ghirshman 1976, II, pl. xxxix/79, 113), and occasionally appear on seals (B.M. HG 11, *Newell* 582–83, *QAN* D.60, Debevoise, pl. II/4). Roman art may have suggested use of this position in Iran.

Publications: Osten, fig. 47. Göbl 1973, 35a⁶.

4 ab. Eagle: with wings displayed.

72 (style C). Eagle with wings displayed. Bead border. This position is familiar on depictions of Roman standards

and on Roman seals (e.g., Hannover 1252–56; *Clercq*, pl. xxvii/3307–08, 3310). Its early occurrence on Sasanian coinage has already been noted. Cf., on silverware, *SPA* IV, pl. 225 v. It is fairly popular on seals: B.M. HG 1–5, 7–9; Louvre I, D.181, II, A.1296; Berlin 892, 1432; Hamburg 119–20; *QAN* D.41, 56, 58, 324(?), 360, 368, 394(?); Debevoise, pl. II/4.

4 ac. Eagle: with wings addorsed.

41 (style C). Eagle in right profile with right wing addorsed. The eagle by himself seldom takes this position; cf. B.M. HG 5 and HI 13. It is common, however, on motifs such as 4 bb. Like the previous position, this one is found on Roman standards (e.g., on the arch of Constantine: R.B. Bandinelli, *Rome: the Center of Power* [New York, 1970], fig. 354).



4 b. Eagle attacking prey.

On Sasanian seals the eagle may be shown attacking a stag, bull, ram, goat, antelope, crow or other bird, rabbit, or a fantastic animal such as the sea-bull (4 ba). He may attack with wings displayed or addorsed; or he may be close. Examples of the latter position are: B.M. HI 1, 3; *SPA* IV, pl. 255 oo; *Gorelick* 85; *Aulock* 223; Geneva 105 (with ram); Berlin 1439; Louvre I, D.226, II, A.1390; B.M. HI 4–6, 16 (with antelope); Berlin 1443 (with bull) and 1438 (with goat); B.M. HI 9, 11–12 (with bird). This position may be the most archaic; it occurs already at Nisa (Masson, figs. 9–11). Use of the other positions in the Arsacid and Sasanian periods may be results of Roman influence. These motifs were probably regarded (according to each case) as representations from nature or as imaginary combats between “royal” animals of different families. Occasionally a traditional religious meaning may be applicable, notably on *Gorelick* 86. Birds of prey, but especially the carrion-eaters, are beneficent in disposing of dead flesh with its threat of polluting the earth and water elements and also men who might come in contact with it. The depiction of eagle and vulture together might be intended to emphasize this feature.

4 ba. Eagle attacking sea-bull.



42 (style B). An eagle with wings displayed, above a sea-bull in right profile. A border is formed by three leafy sprays. The *Bundahišn* implies that the sea-bull (*gāw ī ābig*) is mentioned in Avestan tradition; but its Sasanian image must be modeled after the conventional form of Capricorn, the goat-fish. (The latter is depicted at Afrasiab; see Al'baum, fig. 21 and pl. xxxviii.) The *Bundahišn* says of the sea-bull: "It is in all the seas. When it gives voice, all the fish become pregnant; and all the sea-vermin abort" (XXIV.26=Anklesaria, p. 154. 7-10). It is depicted alone on the seals B.M. KC 1; Berlin 1278-79; Stockholm 54. Cf. the "sea-lion" on Berlin 1185-86.

For the attitude of the eagle, cf. him with wings displayed on antelopes (*Sas. Met.*, pl. 39-40), on a bull (*Sas. Met.*, pl. 31), on a bird (Lukonin 1967, fig. 216). On seals, with wings displayed: B.M. HI 2 (with partridge); HI 15 and Berlin 1441 (hare); *Foroughi*, pl. XLVII/143 and perhaps *Morgan* 313 (bull); Berlin 1440 (ram), 1442 (stag and ibex); Mordtmann, pl. 1/145 (lion mask).

4 bb. Eagle attacking antelope.



161 (style D). Eagle with wings addorsed above a lodged antelope. As noted above, there are more examples of the eagle close with the antelope. In this position, cf. Geneva 102 and Leningrad 593 (with ram); Louvre II, A.1391 (stag); B.M. HI 8, 10 (bird).

Publication: Osten, fig. 68.

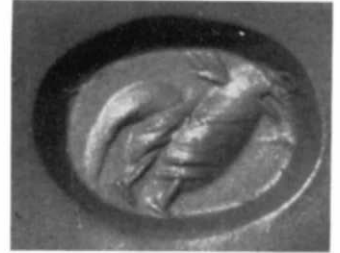
4 c. Cock.

The cock has already been noticed in motif 2 e, where its juxtaposition with the dog is appropriate. Both were regarded as co-workers with the god Srōš against the demons and sorcerers. Srōš thus aids Ardwahišt in maintaining the order of the world (*Bundahišn* III.15, XXIV. 48). The common epithet of the cock is Avestan *parō.darša* (Middle Persian *pēšdaxšag*), "foreseeing". As announcer of the dawn, he arouses mankind to the doing of righteous deeds (*Vendidad* 18.15-16). His beneficent nature is further indicated on some seals by showing him seizing a

scorpion (B.M. HF 3, Leningrad 484). The cock is not a frequent motif in Sasanian art. On seals, see also B.M. HF 2; Leningrad 486; Louvre I, D.175, II, A.1287; *SPA* IV, pl. 256 JJ; Hannover 1729; Mordtmann, pl. III/93. *Foroughi*, pl. xxxviii/68 shows the foreparts of two cocks; they draw the vehicle of a deity whose bust is indicated, in frontal position, above it; and he is presumably to be identified as Srōš. Cf. the seals depicting Māh (see 3 a) and Xwar (3 b). The cock was used as a motif on silk textiles; cf. the pieces in Erdmann, nos. 99–101, and *SPA* IV, pl. 201 c. For the presence of the cock, in fantastic contexts see motif 2 c.

128 (style D). Cock in right profile, standing.

Publications: Osten, fig. 43. Göbl 1973, 29a³.



40 (style D). The same.

Publication: Osten, fig. 46.



4 d. Peacock.

The peacock was appreciated in Sasanian Iran both for its beauty and courtliness and for its savory flavor (for the latter, see *Xusraw ud rēdag* 25). It is found ornamenting stucco-work (Ghirshman 1962, fig. 240; Erdmann, no. 44) and figured on silverware (as indicated by such later pieces as *Sas. Silver*, no. 37, and a Hermitage bronze ewer, Erdmann, no. 82). At Afrasiab paintings of textiles show Sasanian peacock medallions and use the peacock in a frieze motif (Al'baum, pls. I, xxx, LV). With these profile views, cf. the frontal stance on *Sas. Silver*, no. 34, and western examples (Ghirshman 1962, pp. 308–09); it likewise occurs on the Sasanian bulla *QAN* D.20. Cf., on seals: B.M. HB series; Leningrad 432; Berlin 1468–69; *Gorelick* 83; *Foroughi*, pl. XLVII/141; *QAN* D.381. Stockholm 51 shows a peacock being attacked by an eagle. The style is probably a local, Central Asian one; in contrast to normal Sasanian seals, both the addorsed wings are depicted. A seal with an antelope-headed peacock (Göbl 1973, 75a) was mentioned above, 2 c.

172 (style B). A peacock in right profile, standing.

Publications: Osten, fig. 48. *SPA* I, p. 795, fig. 273e. Göbl 1973, 25a².



4 e. Pheasant.

The status of the pheasant in Sasanian culture was similar to that of the peacock. It is one of the savory fowl mentioned in *Xusrāw ud rēdag* 25, and it is depicted on silverware and on seals. There are two notable variations in the image of the pheasant: It may have smooth or ruffled tail feathers, and it may be with or without “ear” tufts. All four combinations of these features are found, but the great majority show a tufted bird with smooth tail feathers. This is most likely the cock of the Western Caucasian Ringneck (*Phasianus colchicus colchicus*); the pheasant without tufts may be the hen of the same species or the cock of another. The variation in the tail feathers is purely stylistic. As an adaptation to the space available, the tail feathers may curve upward instead of extending straight behind the body. On silverware the pheasant is often rendered more ornamental by its wearing a ribbon or bearing in its beak a ribbon with pendent ornament.

Examples of the pheasant follow. Tufted, with even feathers: B.M. HA series, HB 5, 6, HF 4, 6–8; Berlin 1461, 1463, 1465, 1467; Hamburg 123; Hannover 1730; Louvre II, A.1292 (?); *QAN* D.39, 45–46, 68, 133, 325, 359, 363, 365, 387, 392, 432, 450. Cf. on silver vessels: Ghirshman 1962, fig. 257; *Sas. Met.*, pls. 28–29, 35 ff., 40. On a representation of a textile at Taq-i Bustan: Herzfeld, pl. LXIII. Tufted, with ruffled feathers: *QAN* D.372. Without tufts and with even feathers: MMA 29 and Leningrad 546; *Sas. Met.*, pl. 29. Without tufts, with ruffled feathers: Berlin 1480 and Louvre II, A.1289 (?); *Sas. Silver*, no. 32; Taq-i Bustan: Herzfeld, pl. LXIII.



29 (style C). Pheasant in right profile, standing. It lacks “ear” tufts and has even, upcurving tail feathers. A find from Qasr-i Abu Nasr.

Publication: *QAN*, p. 39 and pl. iv/11.

4 f. Duck.

Ducks appear to have been a popular ornamental motif in Sasanian art. They appear on textiles (*Sas. Silver*, no. 63; Herzfeld, pl. LXIII) and representations of textiles (*Taq-i-Bustan* I, pls. xxxv–ix, lxvii; Al’baum, pls. vi, xv, xxii). They are among the birds decorating silver vessels (*SPA* IV, pl. 215 a; *Sas. Met.*, pls. 29, 36–38; *Sas. Silver*, no.

51). The occasional association of a duck with fish or a plant motif may emphasize his auspicious relation to water and so to fertility. On seals, a single duck in profile is usually shown. Besides the MMA seals, see: B.M. HC 2-4; Leningrad 487; *Foroughi*, pl. XLVII/142; Hamburg 121; Pirouzan 4.23; Louvre I, D.166 and 182; *QAN* D.22, 43, 71, 73, 285, 336, 357, 366, 369-71, 374, 378, 384-85, 441; Mordtmann, pl. iv/165; Göbl 1973, 31a. Pairs of ducks are shown on Berlin 1484; *Gorelick* 84; Leningrad 481; *QAN* D.70 (and perhaps on 375-76 in a more complex motif, and 440).



206 (style B). Inscription 43. Duck in right profile, standing.

Late fifth to early sixth century.

204 (style D). The same. Seal was a find of the MMA/German State Museums' expedition to Ctesiphon.



120 (style D). The same.

Publications: *Handbook*, p. 449. Osten, fig. 45.

4 g. Crane.

The crane was probably valued in a manner similar to the duck; the male crane is also mentioned in *Xusraw ud rēdag* 25 as a tasty dish. In the marsh scene on the north wall at Afrasiab, a crane or heron is shown feeding its young with a water snake; together with ducks, fish, snakes, and a frog (plus the "water-goat" mentioned in 4 ab) it thus typifies aquatic life (Al'baum, pls. xxxvii-viii). The crane is represented on a boatman's coat at Taq-i Bustan (*Taq-i-Bustan* I, pls. LII-LIII) and was probably a familiar textile motif. It is found on silverware with other animals and birds (*Sas. Met.*, pls. 36-38, 40). The crane occurs occasionally on seals: B.M. HD series; Louvre II, A.1298; *QAN* D.40, 382-83, 395; Mordtmann, pl. v/138.



23 (style C). Crane standing in right profile; his head and neck are depicted twice – once as raised and alert, once as lowered for food-gathering. An alternative view would be that the bird is actually two-headed; cf. the three-headed duck of *QAN* D.419, also the two-headed bull on Louvre I, D.250. If a pair of cranes were intended, it is likely that



at least a second pair of legs would be indicated. The seal is from Qasr-i Abu Nasr.

Publication: *QAN*, p. 38 and pl. iv/5.

4 h. Pigeon.

The identification of this subject seems probable; cf. the seals Berlin 1483, *Morgan* 581, Louvre I, D.174, 177. The pigeon occurs in the "Dionysiac" scenes (see, e.g., the Kalar Dasht jug, Ghirshman 1962, fig. 256). and perhaps had erotic implications. (None seems determinable for the duck in Sasanian Iran.) It seems to occur among other animals on silverware (*Sas. Silver*, no. 51; *Sas. Met.*, pls. 29, 36–38, 39). It is found on a textile fragment in the Vatican Museum (*SPA* IV, pl. 202 c); textile renderings are also reflected in a medallion painted at Bamiyan, where two pigeons with merging bodies hold either end of a string of pearls (Hackin, p. 9, fig. 1). The auspiciousness of the pigeon's image derives from pre-Sasanian tradition. On a fragment of a bust found at Bard-i Nishande, Fars, the chest bears a depiction of a pigeon perched on a wreath with ribbons and holding in its beak the ring of authority (Ghirshman 1976, II, pl. xxxi/2; it is there termed an eagle).



110 (style D). Pigeon in right profile, standing. *Aulock* 214 is quite similar.

4 i. Crow.

The identifications of the following seals are probable. The crow (genus *Corvus* generally) is a predictable motif simply on an Iranian basis, without reference to its appearance on Roman seals. The crow is regarded as the cleverest of all birds (*Bundahišn* XXIV.33). As a disposer of dead matter, it is a beneficial animal and is not to be killed (*Šāyast nē šāyast* II.5, X.9). At least one clear occurrence of the crow on a silver vessel may be observed, on the frieze adorning the Zargveshi cup. On seals, cf. Berlin 1448; B.M. HE 2, 5; Hoernle 59; *Aulock* 215; Louvre I, D.168, II, A.1283. On B.M. HI 9–12 a crow is being pounced on by an eagle – perhaps illustrating a familiar folktale.

98 (style C). Crow in right profile, walking. Right wing is addorsed.

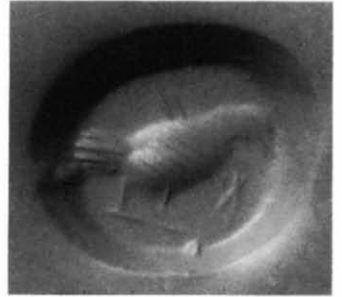


105 (style D). The same. To right is a perfunctory plant element.

Publications: Osten, fig. 42. Göbl 1973, 36a³.

4 j. Other birds.

The following subjects, of which only the first is clearly executed, are of uncertain identity. All are given a conventional pose with addorsed wings. Such ambiguously rendered birds may be better identified when the profuse game bird and songbird imagery of the silver vessels has been sorted. One would expect to find on the seals various other birds occurring in Middle Persian texts, such as the magpie, lark, and starling. A notable indication of the auspicious character of birds generally is the depiction of one perched on an altar (B.M. HF 14; *SPA* IV, pl. 255 τ; Mordtmann, pl. vi/vii). With the seals below, cf. B.M. HE series; Berlin 1445, 1449; Geneva 110; *Newell* 578-81; Louvre I, D.167, 169-74, 176, II, A.1280 ff.; *Foroughi*, pl. XLVII/144; Hamburg 124 (with good detail).



212 (style C). Bird in right profile with addorsed wings. Bead border.



66 (style D). The same.

Publications: *Handbook*, p. 449. Osten, fig. 44.

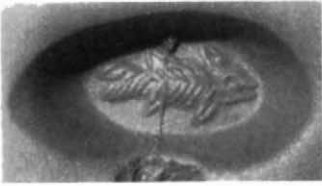
123 (style D). The same.

5. ANIMALS: OTHER.

5 a. Fish

Fish, in Zoroastrian zoology, form the third family of animal life with a total of 10 species and sub-species; they are female, as are water, the earth, and plant life (*Bundahišn* XIII.10, 26-27, XV A.1). The two mythical Kar fish protect the Gōkarn tree in the midst of the Fraxwkard Sea from demonic attacks, preserving it for use in the final sacrifice (*ibid.*, XXIV.1). Fish are thus beneficent and fecund animals. They occur occasionally in Sasanian art;





cf. the seals B.M. JA series, Louvre I, D.162–63 (and on Roman seals, e.g. Hannover 1644). On the Taq-i Bustan relief, the fish appearing in the water are conventionalized in the same way as on the seals, having two dorsal and two ventral fins (*Taq-i-Bustan* I, pls. XLVI–VII). See also the Afrasiab painting referred to in 4 g.



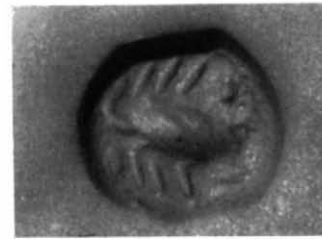
136 (style B). A fish in right profile. Cf. especially B.M. JA 1.

Publications: *Handbook*, p. 449. Osten, fig. 50. *SPA* I, p. 804, fig. 227b. Göbl 1973, 23a².

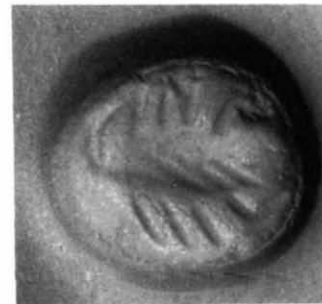


5 b. Scorpion.

The scorpion occurs in his orthodox Zoroastrian role, as demon-created vermin, only in a variation of motif 4 c (see above). Cf. *Bundahišn* IV.15, XXII.1, 11. Otherwise it occurs in beneficent contexts – with Gayōmard, cock, dog, snake (motif 2 e), and with lion and snake. That it implies good fortune is shown by its association with a personal device (Berlin 1508, B.M. ND 1) and with a portrait bust (B.M. AE 3). On B.M. BC 4 it accompanies a man holding a flower, a leafy spray, and the sun and moon. The latter also are found in the lion and scorpion motif (B.M. DH series). It thus seems probable that the scorpion functions as an auspicious earth symbol. The zodiacal sign Scorpio was of comparatively minor importance; its chief star, Antares, also plays no role in the star-planet combats at the Original Creation. For the scorpion on seals, cf. B.M. KA–KB series; Leningrad 686, 692; *Aulock* 232–33; Pirouzan 4.27; Berlin, pl. v; Louvre II, A.1275–79; ANS C'.5; Stockholm 48; *Newell* 586–87; *Foroughi*, pl. LIII/202; Hoernle 62; Debevoise, pl. I/3–4 (with ribbons); it occurs on a finger ring, *QAN* 36 (pl. VI).



137 (style A). Scorpion in right profile. The conventional position is with tail raised, as here (which also agrees with the configuration of Scorpio). An exception is *Gorelick* 87, where either the tail is lowered or left profile is shown.



151 (style B). The same. Bead border.

217 (style C). The same.

86 (style D). The same.

6. ANIMAL COMBINATIONS.

6 a. Joined Foreparts.

While imaginative combinations of animals are attested chiefly on Sasanian seals, the Bamiyan medallion mentioned in 4 h seems to indicate the practice extended to textiles as well. There two birds of the same species are merged upright. Cf. B.M. MC 6, where two goats (?) are merged upright; MC 1 and 7 (goat with antelope); *QAN* D.139 (two horses). The alternative was to invert them to each other. With the examples below, cf. MC 5 (Sēn+lion), MC 3 (lion+goat), Geneva 111 (goat+ram), Louvre I, D.219 (ram+stag), B.M. MC 4 (stag+antelope), *QAN* D.317 (ram+lamassu), Pirouzan 6.10 (two horses).

177 (style C). Two demi-stags inversely joined.=B.M. MC 2.

Publication: Osten, fig. 56.

173 (style B). Demi-horse (winged) and demi-Sēn inversely joined. Bead border.

Publications: Osten, fig. 57. *SPA* I, p. 791, fig. 271c. Göbl 1973, 83d³.



6 b. Triskele of heads.

195 (style B). Triskele terminating in cock's heads (in profile clockwise) with ribbons. The triskeles of bear heads (*Foroughi*, pl. LIV/206), plants (7 d), and lion foreparts (B.M. DG 3), and the linear triskele of 1 ab/31 all revolve clockwise. If an astral symbolism is sought, it may be noted that the revolution of the heavens is clockwise when one faces the auspicious direction, south. The winged lions, although not the other animals, particularly suggest the process of time. A general suggestion of the rhythm of the seasons and the wish for animal and vegetable prosperity may be intended. A simple triskele is used on Ardašīr I's *kulāf* as an alternative to the sun and moon and to the symbols of authority, the diadem and eagle (Lukonin 1969, table xv; cf. Unvala XIX.20).

More frequently used than the triskele is the cross, which also revolves clockwise. It may display two species (B.M. MA 1, bull and ram; cf. MA 3 and 5) or three



(Hamburg 130, stag-bull-ram-bull) or four. Leningrad 757 and Louvre II, A.1408 have, like the preceding one, a ram-bull sequence (respectively, stag-goat-ram-bull and man-stag-ram-bull). A man-stag sequence seems to begin B.M. MA 4; somewhat unclear are Berlin 1583 and MA 6. MA 2 shows a stag-bull-ram-Sēn cross. A plant cross occurs on *QAN* D.274, a tulip cross on D.200.

6 c. Knot of heads.



81 (style B). A knot of two bull's heads (upper left and lower right) facing, respectively, toward a lower left-hand and an upper right-hand ram's head. Above is a crescent, below, an eight-pointed sun-star.

The knot invokes the same animals as does the cross; but it is a static, nonrevolving device. This is clear from the animals' orientations and is emphasized on Göbl 1973, 70k, where a ribbon knot forms a base for the foreparts of two confronted horses. The ribbons occur alone on Louvre I, D.271. Alternative bull and goat heads are seen on *QAN* D.25, where a flower motif is added, as well as the sun and moon symbols. Pirouzan 5.12 has goat and antelope heads. *Foroughi*, pl. LIII/201 pairs stag and antelope, lion and ram; cf. Pirouzan 5.9, with stag and ram, bull and antelope. *Gorelick* 88 perhaps bears horses' heads. The plant knot (*SPA* IV, pl. 256 κκ; Mordtmann, pl. iv/129) parallels the triskele and cross. The knot is presumably, in similar fashion, a prosperity motif.

7. PLANT ELEMENTS.

The luxuriant, almost oppressive plant life of Sasanian stone, stucco, and silver is moderately reflected on seals. The flowers that are the chief ornamental devices in the other media – the rose, tulip, and pomegranate – are the species chiefly attested, though others occur (Leningrad 603). Plants, as food and medicine for mankind, were a vital part of Ohrmazd's creations and part of the struggle against the demons. At the battle of the Original Creation, they had resisted drought. They had diversified into 130,000 species and subspecies in the course of opposing the evil creations. As female, they are always fecund; their special patron is the divinity Amurdād, "Immortality"

(*Bundahišn* I A.11, VI D, XV A.1, XVI.3, XXVI.113–15). The holy quality of plants, as representing the prosperity of material life, is expressed in their ritual use – various flowers and fruits in the minor offerings, the sacred *hōm*, and pomegranate twigs as well, in the major *yasna* sacrifice. The keen appreciation of flowers is reflected in the dedication of each to one of the divinities (*Bundahišn* XVI A) and in the commentary on their scents in *Xusrāw ud rēdag* 68–93.

7 a. Rose.

The “hundred-petaled” rose is dedicated to Dēn – the Zoroastrian religion divinized. In Sasanian art the flower is usually shown opened. When precisely delineated, it has four large, slightly lobed petals about the pistil (shown as a circle), separated by four thin sepals. Usually it is somewhat simplified. Various other flowers appear similarly opened. The most notable use of the rose is at Taq-i Bustan. It appears over the larger grotto, on capitals, and on depictions of textiles (*Taq-i-Bustan* I, pls. XVI, LI–III, LXXXIX; Herzfeld, pls. LIV, LVIII–IX); cf. on actual textiles (Erdmann, no. 100; *SPA* IV, pl. 198 B–C). The rose ornaments late stucco (*SPA* IV, pl. 172 D; Erdmann, no. 55; Ghirshman 1962, figs. 229, 231) and appears on silver vessels (Ghirshman 1962, fig. 256; *Sas. Met.*, pl. 28). The only seals noticed with this version of the rose are *QAN* D.226 and 439.

184 (style A). A rose showing three petals and two sepals; the stem emerges from a pair of stylized three-lobed leaves, the base of which is tied with ribbons. The same flower is shown on B.M. LA 13 flanked by two buds; at Taq-i Bustan the tulip is similarly depicted. *QAN* D.18 is similar to this seal, but simpler.

7 b. Tulip.

The *Tulipa* are easily identified in Sasanian art, when well executed, by their oblanceolate perianth segments; on seals they are sometimes simplified and ambiguous. In Zoroastrianism, the tulip was dedicated to the goddess



Aštād, "Rectitude." Its rich association with human motifs is indicated under motifs 1 aa, 1 ba, 1 ca, and 9 a: and to these the implication of truth and sincerity is well suited. The gesture with the tulip (1 aa and 9 a) must imply good will and friendship, as do such inscriptions as "happiness!" and "prosperity!" and "good day!" (as well as "reliance on the gods"). These all were probably common greeting formulae. In 1 ba and ca the tulip reinforces and celebrates the marriage bond and its expectation of fruition.

The tulip is usually shown as single, although a textile representation at Taq-i Bustan (*Taq-i-Bustan* I, pl. xxxiv) shows a three-fold group, as seals often do. A row of tulips forms a frieze motif, also at Taq-i Bustan (I, pl. xvii); and a stucco panel from Ctesiphon presents a circlet of alternating tulips and pomegranate flowers. On silverware, see *Sas. Silver*, no. 24. On seals: B.M. LA 7-12, LB 4; *SPA* IV, pl. 256 H; Berlin 1525, 1527, 266; Louvre II, A.1271-72; *QAN* D.145, 200, 278; Debevoise, pl. II/12; Göbl 1973, 95c; Mordtmann, pl. I/3, 6; Hamburg 133-34; *Foroughi*, pl. LIV/207.



138 (style A). Inscription 20. Three tulips branching from a single stem, separated from one another by four serrate leaves. Three perianth segments of each flower are shown. The stem is tied at the bottom with a ribbon.

Fourth century.

Publications: *MMA Hand-Book No. 9*, p. 35, no. 29. *MMAB* 20, 1925, p. 84, fig. 12. Osten, fig. 100.



39 (style B). A long ribbon is looped to form a diadem. Above it is a spray of three tulips, each flanked by two thin leaves; within the loop is a fourth tulip. This motif is found in three other versions. On *Foroughi*, pl. LIV/209, the diadem has a spray of five tulips, and within it is a ring. On B.M. CH 7 there are also five; within the diadem is an open right hand, palm outward, with thumb and forefinger joined. (Cf. the left hand depicted in 9 a.) B.M. CD 1 shows a child, on his mother's lap, grasping either the diadem or the ring with ribbons, on which are three tulips. Thus, as was also seen in 1 ba, there is an association between tulip, diadem/beribboned ring, and a hand gesture; and the diadem or ring supplies the specific context of marriage and desire for offspring.

Publications: Osten, fig. 99. Göbl 1973, 95b³.

7 c. Pomegranate.

The pomegranate occurs in Sasanian art both as flower and as fruited shrub or tree. The former is recognized by its globose calyx and small flowers; it is the more common depiction. As a prominent symbol of fruitfulness, the pomegranate flower appropriately occurs on a queen's crown depicted on a silver dish (*SPA IV*, pl. 230 A). It is combined with a ram-horn element, just as the Kushano-Sasanian crown of Wahrām employs the lotus. The pomegranate flower may also be found as a decorative motif on stucco (Ghirshman 1962, fig. 231) and silverware (*Sas. Met.*, pl. 64), and a textile representation (*Taq-i-Bustan I*, pl. LXX). It is common on seals, with either one flower or a conventional group of three shown: B.M. LA 4, 6, LB series; *SPA IV*, pl. 256 J; Berlin 1517, 1523, 1526, 1528; Louvre I, D.158–60, II, A.1268–69; *Foroughi*, pl. LIV/207; *Gorelick* 89; *Newell* 562–63, 608; *Aulock* 243; Pirouzan 4.30; Stockholm 58. For depictions of the tree, see 7 cc.

7 ca. Pomegranate flower.

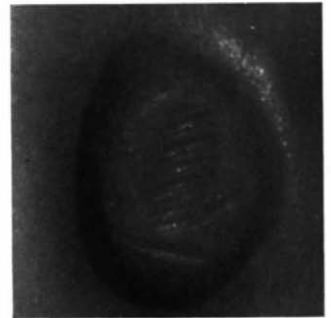
59 (style D). Pomegranate flower flanked by two thin leaves. Leaves and stem merge at a straight base stroke; three petals are shown. The flower rests upon a wing base. The seal was purchased in the field by the Ctesiphon expedition.

170 (style D). The same. The flower itself rests on the base stroke; a very short stem crosses it.

127 (style D). The same, but the calyx is unopened and no stem is indicated.

7 cb. Pomegranate flower and bull horns.

95 (style D). A pomegranate flower, as on no. 127 but with stem, which rests on a rack of bull's horns. The motif is clearer on Leningrad 611. The flower rests on a full bull head on Louvre I, D.236 and Göbl 1973, 117a¹ (Berlin). The theme of animal and vegetable prosperity is thus again expressed. Otherwise there does not appear to be a special association between pomegranate and cattle. It is the jasmine that is dedicated to Wahman, the patron of cattle.





7 cc. Pomegranate branch.

142 (style B). Only the lower half of the sealing surface remains. It depicts a pomegranate branch with two flowers. *QAN* D.328 illustrates the subject clearly. The fruited or blossoming pomegranate tree occurs on a textile fragment (Herzfeld, pl. LXII) and is a frequent decorative element on textile representations at Afrasiab (Al'baum, pls. vi, xvi, xix, xxii, xxvii-xxx, LIII, lv). The pomegranate fruit, it may be noted, is itself a decorative feature (e.g., in a frieze at Afrasiab, Al'baum, pl. 1). This seal is a Qasr-i Abu Nasr find.

Publication: *QAN*, p. 39 and pl. iv/16.

7 d. Triskele of leaves.



203 (style A). Inscription 48. Triskele of trilobed leaves. Between the leaves are a six-pointed sun-star, a broken crescent moon, and a star disk. The disk cannot represent a planet, since these are inimical; Tištar/Sirius (discussed in 3 b) is by far the most likely star to be represented. As guarantor of vegetal prosperity, it well fits the plant motif and is a worthy companion to the sun and moon. The same combination of symbols occurs on *Foroughi*, pl. XLVIII/156 with the foreparts of two winged horses. It is possible that the small disk sometimes represents the sun, rather than the star, when it occurs within the horns of the moon. See the *kulāf* of Ardašīr I (Göbl 1968, nos. 1-2); cf. on the Barm-i Dilak relief (Hinz, pl. 126). See also the crescent-disk medallions on paintings of textiles at Afrasiab (Al'baum, pls. xvi, xviii, LIII).

The long, trilobed leaf is a conventional representation of plant life often observed on silverware and at Taq-i Bustan. Cf. the other plant triskeles, *QAN* D.427 and Hamburg 139.

Late fifth century.

Publications: Osten, fig. 101. Göbl 1973, 88c.



8. ALTAR.

The occurrence of the fire altar has been seen in the complex motifs of 1 d. On the following seals it is depicted alone as a holy and auspicious object. It could remind the viewer of the *yasna* rite, which is central to Zoroastrianism,

the virtue of properly maintaining a sacred fire and feeding it with aromatic woods, etc. The point of showing three flames on some seals might be to represent the three sacred fire establishments Farnbāg, Gušnašp, and Burzēn-Mihr.

8 aa. Fire altar: single flame.

111 (style D). Fire altar with single flame. The altar has a double upper plinth and ribbons hanging to the base. The seal is a find from Nishapur. Cf. B.M. LG 1; Berlin 1542, 1544; Louvre I, D.280–81, II, A.1469–70; Pirouzan 4.28 (with realistic depiction).

118 (style D). The same.

140 (style D). The same, but with a double lower plinth as well.



8 ab. Fire altar: triple flame.

107 (style D). Fire altar with triple flame; those on either side are thin and not striated. The altar has one upper and one lower plinth and ribbons descending toward the base. Cf. B.M. LG 2; Berlin 1534; *QAN*, pl. vi/45; *Newell* 559–60; ANS C.4; *Aulock* 244.

101 (style D). The same, with three equal-sized and striated flames. The top plinth is not shown, although the ribbons are maintained.

133 (style D). The same, with three equal, angular flames. The bottom plinth is double; the top one is not shown. The ribbons terminate in linear pendants hanging obliquely.

Publications: *Osten*, fig. 53. *Göbl* 1973, 22b (upside down).



8 b. Altar without flames.

139 (style B). An altar, having three upper and three lower plinths, stands within a pillared arch. It is flanked and topped by a four-pointed star. The altar is here placed in a temple context; and its auspiciousness (or perhaps the relation of the sacred fire to the sun) is indicated by the astral signs. Alternatively, the subject may be a crypto-Christian one. The ambiguity of the four-pointed star has already been referred to in 1 ac. This ambiguity is re-





inforced by ANS C'.1, where a person called Wehnām (“Of-good-name”) displays his personal device incorporating the four-pointed star and flanks it with two others. Note the ambivalence of the name, as well as that of the device. Cf. a device with three stars and one with an explicit Christian cross (Unvala II.42 bis, IX.19). On SPA IV, pl. 255 τ, similar stars flank a beribboned altar and a bird perches on top; Mordtmann, pl. vi/vii has altar, bird, and one such star, while pl. v/64 has simply altar and two stars. On B.M. HF 14 the altar and bird are accompanied by a fish. Both animals suggest commonplaces of early Christian art. Although the species of bird is not clear, cf. the words of Clement of Alexandria: “Let the dove or the fish . . . be signs for you” (*ho Paidagōgós* III.2; see discussion of the fish image in A. N. Didron, *Christian Iconography*, reprint of the 1851 edition, New York, 1965, I, pp. 344–67).



9. SYMBOL.

9 a. Human hand.

As was noted in 1 aa, there are two common gestures in Sasanian art. One is the expression of homage (*namāz*) made by the king toward the gods and by nobles toward the king. It occurs regularly on the reliefs and also on the Mtskheta and Zargveshi vessels. It is well depicted on

Kirdēr's Naqsh-i Rajab portrait and inscription (*CII Kartir*, pl. LXXX). The noble raises his right hand with nearly closed fist and forefinger extended upward. His little finger is somewhat open; it is usually fully closed (e.g., Ardašīr I at Naqsh-i Rostam, Ghirshman 1962, fig. 157). The gesture is made with the right hand, unless the right is occupied with an object.

The auspicious gesture expressing greeting or invocation is made with the open hand, the thumb and forefinger either touching one another or holding a tulip. The right hand is preferred among the men and women illustrated in motifs 1 aa, 1 b, 1 c. But on seals the right hand is depicted in only a few cases: B.M. CH 7 (discussed in 7 b); *Foroughi*, pl. xxxvii/56; Mordtmann, pl. III/117. A notable variation is drawn by C. W. King (King 1885, pl. ix/2), where a hand grasps a cross instead of a flower and is accompanied by a device. On B.M. CI 3 and MMA 223 a right hand makes no clear gesture. Both hands make the gesture on Göbl 1973, 8b and Mordtmann, pl. v/50. On other examples it is the left hand that is shown, including *QAN* D.48, where the full bust and arm are included. The reason for this contrast between the full-figure depictions and the majority of the single-hand ones is unclear. Cf. left hand with tulip: B.M. CH 1, 3, CI 2; *Foroughi*, pl. xxxvii/57; Louvre I, D.270. Without it: B.M. CH 2, 4–6, CI 1; Louvre I, D.269; Berlin 1129–30; *Newell* 610; Pirouzan 6.9; ANS C'.3; Mordtmann, pl. I/80. No clear gesture is seen on B.M. CI 4–6; Leningrad 812; or Mordtmann, pl. III/48.



49 (style A). Left hand open, palm outward, with thumb and forefinger joined. It terminates in a cufflike base within a pair of wings. The latter are styled in a “fern” fashion (cf. 1 ad/22); they are tied with ribbons and rest on a triangular base.

64 (style B). The same, terminating in a pair of ribbons.
Publication: Osten, fig. 60.

223 (style E). Crude hand (apparently a right one) with all fingers spread.
Publication: Osten, fig. 59.

9 b. Device.

Sasanian personal or clan devices, *nišān*, are apparent elaborations of the simpler emblems used in the Arsacid period. The Pahlava king Gondophares (ca. A.D. 19–45) shows his device mounted on standards by his throne (Gardner, pl. xxii/10). It shows the basic structure: a base, a shaft, and an identifying configuration – in this case, the diadem. In the late second century, Vologeses IV displays a simple device mounting either the ring of authority or the sun disk (Sellwood, type 84/131). Nearly the same form recurs in the Sasanian period (*Newell* 816). Ardašir I, on his Firuzabad relief, displays a sun-moon standard which, together with the diadem symbol, is a common motif of *drahm* coin reverses in the third and fourth centuries. (See also Unvala II.43.) Presumably the king exercised some control over the proliferation of such devices, as of other honorary insignia. They were already elaborate in the third century, as is shown by MMA 3 (in 9 bb). Later Sasanian devices show an increasing tendency to absorb monographic elements; this trend paralleled the freer use of abbreviations generally, which the QAN bullae illustrate. Most of the abbreviations and monograms remain to be solved. An extreme example of such a device was correctly interpreted, with the aid of the surrounding inscription, as the name Pērōz Gušnasp (Göbl 1971, p. 111). The principle involved, however, was not perceived. Three letters are used twice; one is read as both /l/ and /č/ (reversed), one as both /y/ and /w/. Father de Menasce's reading of the Ctesiphon stucco plaque (Erdmann, no. 56) need be only slightly emended. It is surely 'pz for *abzōn*, "Prosperity!" (cf. Menasce, pp. 309 ff.). His second example, a seal, has simply ḥws for the name "Xusraw." QAN D.8 has t'ky, "crown," Berlin 1559 kdw, "Kay"; other noble epithets may no doubt be found.

Such arbitrary, abstract insignia must have been highly prized; seals bearing them were probably used by numerous members, dependents, and servants of a given clan or estate, resulting in many duplicates. At the same time the merchants, clergy, officials, etc., of the middle classes were employing the animal and other motifs described above as their personal emblems. It is, in fact, animal devices which the *Šāhnāma* chiefly recalls. The continual association of name and device in the epic is noteworthy. E.g., "I do not

know him by his name and device" (II, p. 606.565); "Whose was the name and device of this letter?" (VII, p.158.1858); "Xusraw asked [the merchant] his name and device . . . He told Xusraw his device directly" (VII, p. 92.1075-78). Cf. motif 1 ae, where bust and emblem occur together.

Below, the devices are divided into three rough groups, according to structure. Each is described systematically in the interest of their careful study. Future analysis of the monograms first of all necessitates distinguishing simple ornamental elements from letters.

9 ba. Device: based on crescent and standard.

130 (style B). Crescent, standard, base. Upper right branch: reverse /š/; right branch: /w/y/, with extension to left, Parallel not noted.

Publication: Osten, fig. 89.

116 (style C). Crescent, standard with /k/ branch, ending in a reverse crescent, all placed asymmetrically on a double crescent over a /b³/. Bead border. For variants of the double-crescent standard, B.M. NC 1-2, 6, Unvala 16-22. A /k/ base occurs on Louvre II, A.1462 and Unvala 47.

Publication: Osten, fig. 92.

71 (style B). Inscription 18. Crescent, short standard with double-crescent branch above heart on base. The execution is with a textured line, in contrast to the usual single- and double-line forms.

Late fourth to early fifth century.

164 (style B). Inscription 45. Crescent, short standard and heart extended to a double reverse-crescent base. Branches /+/w/y/. An eight-pointed sun-star is within the crescent. The branch form is familiar; cf; the Ctesiphon stucco plaque and the more complex contexts of B.M. NF 2-3.

Sixth to seventh century.

Publications: *MMA Hand-Book No. 12*, p. 46, no. 12. Osten, fig. 97. Göbl 1973, 109a¹⁵.



9 bb. Device: based on crescent, standard, and bar with terminals.



165 (style B). Inscription d. Double crescent, standard, bar with terminals above a ring, all within a pair of wings tied with ribbons. The basic device occurs on *Newell* 603, Unvala VII.1 and Berlin 1567. Louvre I, D.275 and B.M. NG 1 show the double-crescent variant. The disk is clearly a sun symbol, as on the simple sun-moon devices of *QAN* D.213, 260, 270 (which recall Ardašīr's device). MMA 165 is duplicated, but with a single crescent, on *Foroughi*, pl. xxxiii/27; Göbl 1973, 109a¹²; and B.M. NG 6. Pirouzan 2.21 and *Foroughi*, pl. xxxv/39 repeat the bar element as base; while *Foroughi*, pl. xxxvi/52 and Berlin 1569 add a heart. For the disk as a base element, cf. B.M. ND 8, NG 4-5; Berlin 1571, 1574; *Foroughi*, pl. xxxvi/46. As a top element: B.M. NB 4-6; *Newell* 601; *QAN* D.18, 210. *QAN* D.259 and Berlin 1554 place it within the crescent.

Sixth century.

Publications: Osten, fig. 94. *SPA* I, p. 807, fig. 280. Göbl 1973, 109a⁹.



55 (style C). Crescent, standard and base, bar with terminals as branch. Solid, rope-pattern border.=B.M. NG 2; Louvre I, D.272, 274, II, A.1457; Unvala VII.14a; *Aulock* 247.

Publication: *SPA* I, p. 805, fig. 278a.



74 (style B). Crescent, standard extended to within a small reverse crescent, bar with terminals as branch. See similar forms on B.M. NG 11; Berlin 1564, 1576; *QAN* D.339; *Foroughi*, pl. xxxiv/28; Unvala VII.23.

Publication: Osten, fig. 90.

146 (style C). Similar to the preceding, but with only a left-hand horn at the bottom. Cf. the asymmetrical Unvala V.6.

Publication: Osten, fig. 88.



222 (style C). Similar to 74 but with large reverse crescent. Bead border. The seal is a find of the Ctesiphon expedition. Cf. B.M. NG 10, NH 3; *Gorelick* 90; Debevoise, pl. II/8, 10; Pirouzan 2.17, 2.22 (and cf. 2.18).

83 (style C). Crescent, standard, bar with terminals twice occurring, ribbons tied at the bottom. Upper border of beads.=Unvala VIII.2; cf. B.M. NI 8; *Foroughi*, pl. xxxiii/24; Louvre II, A.1459.

Publications: *Handbook*, p. 449. Osten, fig. 91.



106 (style B). Crescent, standard, branch bar with terminals, base bar with pendants. Solid border with rope pattern.=B.M. NI 1-5; Leningrad 199; *Newell* 605 (cf. 603); Hamburg 136; Louvre II, A.1460-61; *Foroughi*, pl. xxxiv/33, 35, xxxv/38; Unvala XI.3; *SPA* I, p. 805, fig. 278d; Pirouzan 2.14 (cf. 2.15).

Publications: Osten, fig. 93. *SPA* I, p. 805, fig. 278h.

58 (style C). Inscription 30. Similar, but the base bar is slightly shorter and a chevron is added within the crescent. The device terminates in ribbons.

Fifth to sixth century.

Publications: *Handbook*, p. 449, Osten, fig. 96.



202 (style B). Crescent, standard, bar with terminals resting on a forked base with terminals. Bead border.=B.M. NH 6-7; Berlin 1557, 1572; Leningrad 191-93; *QAN* D.232; *Foroughi*, pls. xxxiv/32, xxxv/37; Hamburg 135; Yale 10a; *SPA* I, p. 805, fig. 278 f; *Aulock* 246; Pirouzan 2.11; Unvala II.33, IX.1-2a. Cf. B.M. NH 4, 8-10; Berlin 1549, 1577; Unvala IX.4-8; Pirouzan 2.12.



214 (style B). The same. Below, an inverted crescent. Border formed by two converging plant sprays. The seal is from Qasr-i Abu Nasr.

Publication: *QAN*, p. 39 and pl. iv/13.



87 (style B). Crescent, standard with branch bar and terminals upon a heart, base bar with terminals. Above the latter are a crescent and a six-pointed sun-star, which is repeated within the crescent. On either side is a rudimentary plant spray. = B.M. NJ 3-5; *Foroughi*, pl. xxxvi/48; Göbl 1973, 109a¹⁴; Unvala IV.5; Ak-Depe, p. 106.



3 (style B). Inscription 1. The same, but with the branch bar curved, the standard rising to a reverse /p/ within the crescent. The heart inadvertently penetrates beyond the base bar. When a /p/ occurs alone in a device, it could well indicate *farroxih*, "Happiness!"



80 (style C). Crescent, standard crossing branch bar with terminals and pendants, a heart extended into a forked base with terminals. Residual ribbons at bottom. A small disk is within the crescent; a faint crescent is to the right of the heart. = Unvala X.9. For the upper portion, cf. Berlin 2087. Cf. the extended hearts of Göbl 1973, 109a¹³ and *Foroughi*, pl. xxxiv/29; diamonds of Berlin 839 and Unvala IX.18; circle of B.M. NG 9.

Publication: Osten, fig. 98.



37 (style B). Inscription g. Crescent, disk, bar with terminals on standard with double reverse-crescent base. The seal has not been located. For the disk as a middle element cf. B.M. NC 3, 8; Berlin 1547, 1558. = *Foroughi*, pl. xxxiv/30, 36; for variants, 31, xxxvi/50; Unvala II.45.

Publications: King 1872, p. 399. King 1885, pl. VIII/9. Osten, fig. 95.



9 bc. Device: without crescent.

210 (style B). Ellipsoidal disk, joined above and below to two bars, whose terminals are toward the disk. A parallel has not been noted. For general structure, cf. B.M. NC 3.

9 c. Sun and Moon.

The frequency of the sun and moon symbols in Sasanian art indicates their importance in the total culture. The moon, assisting Wahman and associated with Ardwīsūr, Gōš, and others, helped maintain moisture and plant and animal prosperity in the world (see above, 3 a). “To the moon is the allotting of the world’s fortune” (*Bundahišn* XXVI.21 = *Anklesaria*, p. 164.13). The sun retained his ancient significance as a bringer of light, heat, and growth. He was regarded as Ohrmazd’s chief agent in dispensing the means to prosperity and in holding the demonic creations in check. As such he was to be duly worshiped three times daily (*Nīrangistān*, fol. 70a); and such worship is continually associated with the mages in the accounts of the Christian martyrs. The king, in claiming divinity, could title himself “partner of the stars, brother of the sun and moon” (Ammianus Marcellinus XVII.5.3). The sun had also acquired, already in the Arsacid period, astrological and eschatological importance. It measures the elapsing of the 9000-year span of celestial motion, during which good and evil wage war; as it strives upward toward the zenith of the universe, its portents mark the passing of the millennia. After the death of each person, moreover, the sun receives his archetypal “form” (*ēwēnag*, *Bundahišn* III.13).



Use of the sun-disk and crescent has been seen in 9 b. The sun-star (with six, eight, or twelve points) and the

crescent appear fairly often on Arsacid coins, either separately or together. The sun-star also adorns the *kulāf* of Mithridates II (123–88 B.C.) and others (Sellwood, types 28–29, 31–32, 90). Ardašīr I employed it as an alternative to the crescent and small disk (Göbl 1968, nos. 4, 6–7). On coins the device combining sun-disk and crescent fell out of use in the fifth century; and, instead, the sun-star and crescent were sometimes placed on the reverse. From the reign of Kawād (A.D. 488–97, 499–531) the two symbols began to appear, coupled, on the obverse. The crescent, moreover, was a consistent element of royal crowns from that of Yazdigard I (A.D. 399–420) onward. One may note its prominence over the larger grotto at Taq-i Bustan (*Taq-i-Bustan* I, pl. xvi) and on a depiction of the royal throne on a silver vessel (*Sas. Silver*, no. 12). The sun had earlier been represented in the rayed Mihr-crown of Wahrām I (A.D. 273–276); the sun-star sometimes appears on late Sasanian crowns (Xusraw II, Yazdigard III).

The royal use of the luminaries is one reflection of their cultural significance, and their frequency on people's seals is another. Although the sun and moon are most often seen as a subsidiary motif, they also occur as a distinct subject. The sun-star is usually cut on a seal as a sequence of crossed lines; but occasionally a central disk is indicated (B.M. NB 1; Hamburg 107 *bis*; *Foroughi*, pl. LII/189). Cf. the almost flowerlike form on *Foroughi*, pl. L/17. The sun rarely occurs alone (Louvre I, D.282). As on some Arsacid coins, the sun is sometimes doubled (*Newell* 607, Göbl 1973, 101b) to flank the moon; the opposite may be seen in the device of *QAN* D.213. The usual seal arrangement is with the sun above or slightly within the horns of the moon: B.M. NB 1, 3; Berlin 1537–39; *QAN* D.189, 202, 408; Mordtmann, pl. 1/61 (with wing base). Cf. B.M. NB 1 with the sun below the crescent.



115 (style C). Inscription 16. Six-pointed sun-star above crescent moon. Since more space was left at the bottom of the seal, the inscription was cut from 9:00 counterclockwise to 2:00; the conventional order is from 5:00 clockwise.

Fifth century.

Publications: Osten, fig. 102. *SPA* I, p. 798, fig. 275b. Göbl 1973, 101a³.

10. INSCRIPTION.

10 a. Sasanian inscription.

167 (style B). Inscription 37. Border of rings. Cf. *QAN* D.191 (“accountant of Ardašīr-xwarrah and Behšāpūr and Nēw-Dārāb”) and D.209 (“accountant of Pārs”).

Sixth century.



10 b. Post-Sasanian inscription.

1 (style B). Inscription 47. A find from the Nishapur excavations. The execution of the script is distinctive. Contrast, for example, the late Sasanian private seal, *Foroughi*, pl. xxxii/13. A Zoroastrian community must have long persisted in Nishapur in Islamic times. According to the historian al-Mas‘ūdī, it still contained a fire temple in the late tenth century (see K. Schippmann, *Die iranischen Feuerheiligtümer* [Berlin, 1971], p. 31).

Probably eighth to ninth century.



Index by Style

The rendering of motifs on Sasanian seals remains at a fairly simple technical level, but there is considerable variation in the competence. The Museum's seals are here classified, according to style and execution into five general categories. The determining factors are the use of line and the degree of modeling in the representations. The stylistic categories, by themselves, provide no chronological guide. They may, however, support the evaluation of a seal's shape, motif, and epigraphy – e.g., the naturalistic style is notable on portrait bezels bearing the inscriptional uncial script.

Under each stylistic category are listed the occurring motifs and the appropriate seal numbers.

Style A – Naturalistic.

These seals indicate shape and contour carefully. They seek to present a realistic and even, in the case of human portraits, an individualistic image.

MOTIF	CATALOGUE NUMBERS	MOTIF	CATALOGUE NUMBERS
1 aa	25	3 gd	179
1 ad	9, 11, 19, 21, 22, 31, 32, 171	3 kb	211
2 c	69	5 b	137
3 bc	152, 166	7 a	184
3 ca	126	7 b	138
3 e	30	7 d	203
3 fa	160	9 a	49

Style B – Conventional.

The motif receives a clear but standardized rendering. Shape and modeling are slightly simplified. However, details of the image are accurately depicted.

MOTIF	CATALOGUE NUMBERS	MOTIF	CATALOGUE NUMBERS
1 ab	14	3 hb	2
1 ad	12, 15, 17, 34, 47, 104	3 i	200
1 ae	132	4 aa	97
1 bb	114	4 ba	42
1 be	6	4 d	172
2 a	174	4 f	206
2 ba	46, 90	5 a	136
2 g	153a	5 b	151
2 h	153b	6 a	173
3 ab	18, 20, 24, 33	6 b	195
3 bb	189	6 c	81
3 bc	4, 62, 102, 119, 181, 185, 186, 197	7 b	39
3 cb	178, 180	7 cc	142
3 db	99	8 b	139
3 dc	112, 216	9 a	64
3 dd	79, 88, 129	9 ba	71, 130, 164
3 de	26	9 bb	3, 37, 74, 87, 106, 165, 202, 214
3 fb	117	9 bc	210
3 fd	27, 65	10 a	167
3 ga	183	10 b	1
3 gb	5		
3 gc	16, 168, 190		
3 ha	182, 187		

Style C – Devolved.

On these seals the general accuracy of the motif is maintained. However, reliance on simple drilling produces a tendency toward schematic and uneven modeling, and the use of thicker lines leads to the loss of fine detail.

MOTIF	CATALOGUE NUMBERS	MOTIF	CATALOGUE NUMBERS
1 ac	13	3 fb	54
1 ad	73, 124, 191, 196	3 fc	82
1 ba	121, 122, 134, 141	3 fe	38, 48, 50, 53
1 bc	36	3 ga	113
1 bd	93	3 ha	84, 220
1 be	57	3 hc	94
1 ca	154	3 i	150
1 da	125	3 ja	89, 209
2 a	7, 60a	3 jb	10
2 bb	192, 215	4 ab	72
2 i	8	4 ac	41
3 aa	205, 207	4 e	29
3 ac	67	4 g	23
3 ba	61, 103	4 i	98
3 bc	175, 198	4 j	212
3 bd	218	5 b	217
3 ca	45, 85, 131	6 a	177
3 da	56	9 ba	116
3 dc	70, 108, 109	9 bb	55, 58, 80, 83, 146, 222
3 dd	188	9 c	115

Style D – Outline.

In this style not only fine details are absent, but also more integral features of the motif, e.g., limbs of animals are reduced or barely indicated. The motif is thus incomplete or distorted. For its recognition there is heavy dependence on rudimentary outline, often achieved by the shallow cutting of the figure, which is then further shaped by the imposition of simple linear cuts.

MOTIF	CATALOGUE NUMBERS	MOTIF	CATALOGUE NUMBERS
1 ad	224	3 ja	28, 143
1 cb	44, 100	3 ka	43, 92
1 da	52	3 m	35
1 db	193	4 bb	161
2 d	75, 76, 77, 155, 156, 157, 158, 162, 163	4 c	40, 128
2 e	60b, 78, 159	4 f	120, 204
2 f	51, 219	4 h	110
2 j	144	4 i	105
3 aa	147	4 j	66, 123
3 ab	91	5 b	86
3 bc	96, 221	7 ca	59, 127, 170
3 ca	145	7 cb	95
3 da	208	8 aa	111, 118, 140
3 dc	149, 169, 176	8 ab	101, 107, 133

Style E – Scratch.

Seals executed with no modeling or only slight outlining; the design is rendered essentially by patterns of cross-cut lines.

MOTIF	CATALOGUE NUMBERS	MOTIF	CATALOGUE NUMBERS
1 ad	68, 135, 148, 194	3 l	201
3 ca	199	9 a	223
3 da	63, 213		

Index of Subsidiary and Decorative Elements

The number assigned to each of the following elements is also given in the corresponding entries in the **Catalogue**. Motif numbers and seal numbers are given for each element.

1. Scorpion (motif 5 a).

3 gc 190

- 2. Plant** Plant elements occur in two forms: (a) a single-branched, long leafy spray, and (b) a triple-branched, low growth that varies considerably in the various depictions. They are distinct from the forms of motif group 7.

(a)		(b)	
1 ad	73	2 ba	46
1 da	125	3 bc	4
3 bc	4	3 da	56
3 dc	216	3 dc	112
		3 fb	117
		4 i	105

3. Device (motif 9 b).

1 ad 31

4. The luminaries (motif 9 c). Their occurrences may be divided into four groups: (a) the sun-star alone, (b) the moon crescent alone, (c) sun and moon, (d) sun and moon with a third symbol. The sun-star tends to be six-pointed but varies. The number of points is indicated in parentheses. The parentheses in (b) indicate upright crescents, which may be used as simple decorative devices. (See **Inscriptions**, b and c.)

(a)			(b)		
<hr/>			<hr/>		
1 ac	13 <i>bis</i>	(4)	1 be	6	
1 ad	15	(4)	2 ba	46	
1 cb	44 <i>bis</i>	(6)	2 c	69	
	100	(6)	2 f	219	
2 a	60a	(8)	(2 j	144)	
3 ab	18	(4)	3 bc	119	
3 bc	96	(6)		185	
3 da	56	(6)	(3 bd	218)	
3 dd	79	(12)	3 ca	126	
	129	(5)	3 dc	216	
3 fb	54	(4)	3 fe	48	
8 b	139 <i>ter</i>	(4)	3 gc	16	
9 ba	164	(8)	3 i	200	
			9 bb	214 (inverted)	
(c)			(d)		
<hr/>			<hr/>		
1 ad	22	(6)	[7 d	203]	Restoration of the crescent
	124	(5)			is assumed. Six-pointed
3 bc	181	(6)			sun-star with small disk.
	197	(6)	9 bb	87	A second six-pointed star
3 dc	108	(6)			occurs.
3 fd	27	(6)			
3 fe	38	(6)			
3 ha	182	(6)			
6 c	81	(6)			

5. Miscellaneous

1 ad	19	(i) a horse head, (ii) a pattern of dots, (iii) two short parallel lines marked at their midpoint by small perpendicular lines
	31	a simple triskele within a circle
3 ab	20	three elongated beads within the border
3 bc	185	a pair of short parallel lines
9 bb	80	a small disk (cf. 4 (d), no. 203) and a faint crescent mark (the latter may be accidental)

6. Base A head or bust may terminate in one of four ways; human busts occur only with the first three: (a) wings without ribbons, (b) wings with ribbons, (c) palmette row, (d) ribbons only.

(a)		(b)		(c)		(d)	
_____		_____		_____		_____	
1 ad	104	1 ad	22	1 ab	14	3 jb	10
	196	3 de	26	1 ad	171	9 a	64
3 fe	38	3 fe	48		191	9 bb	58
	50	9 a	49				83
	53	9 bb	165				
7 ca	59						

7. Arch The motif is placed within an architectural element.

1 ba	121	1 bd	93	8 b	139
------	-----	------	----	-----	-----

8. Border Five types of border patterns are distinguished: (a) A ring of bead shapes is the most common. These may be round but are more usually elongated; in crude form, they become thick dashes. On official seals a round, hollow ring shape is found. The ring of round shapes is the underlying pattern and is familiar on Sasanian and Kushano-Sasanian coinage; it is a device frequently used for defining medallions on Sasanian silverware and in other media (e.g., textiles, as depicted on the Taq-i Bustan reliefs, the Afrasiab wall-paintings, etc.). On the seals the ring is rarely complete; rather, beads tend to be added in order to fill whatever vacant space is left in the margin. The presence of only a few beads is indicated by the category "residual." (For a seal closely similar to the medallion depictions in other media, see B.M. HC 3.) (b) A plain, solid ring. Although the one seal with this border is not of Iranian workmanship, such borders occur on other seals (e.g., B.M. AF 1). (c) A solid ring with a striated "rope" pattern. (d) A wreath. (e) Two converging sprays (seal no. 42 has a variant, a circlet of three sprays).

(a) – round	– elongated	– residual	
9 ba 116	1 ad 148	2 bb 192	
	194	3 aa 147	
– ring	2 a 7	3 dc 176	
10 a 167	3 bb 189	3 dd 79	
	3 bc 175		188
	198	3 ha 84	
	3 dc 70		182
	109	3 j 209	
	169	4 ab 72	
	5 b 151	4 i 212	
	9 bb 83	6 a 173	
	202	9 bb 222	
(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)
1 ad 9	3 ab 20	3 gd 179	2 c 69
	9 bb 55		4 ba 42
	106		9 bb 87
			214

Inscriptions

Since most of the Museum's seals are private seals, the inscriptions found on them are either the proper names of the owners, pious or auspicious phrases, or a combination of the two. The one official seal (no. 167, inscription 37) bears an administrative title. The inscriptions are here arranged in paleographical order. The glyptic scripts used for the Middle Persian language are all ultimately based on the third-century uncial script, which is abundantly attested on the Sasanian relief inscriptions.¹ A steady influence must have been exerted on this uncial, however, by the emerging cursive script used in the chancery and in commercial activities.² Seals, as a class, are more conservative in script than the *drahm* coinage and show fewer aberrations in letter forms; they are also more conservative than the inscribed silver vessels, where there is a tendency to imitate *dipinto* writing.³ The seals do, nevertheless, show the process of transformation of the Middle Persian script. The inscriptions fall into four general categories:

A. Inscriptional uncial (inscr. 1–13) of the third to fourth centuries, usually found on bezels. Letter forms agree with the Sasanian inscriptions and the early coin inscriptions; stylistic differences or simplifications in execution are quite minor. Ligatures occur with *h*, *y*, and *z*.

B. Intermediate scripts (inscr. 14–36) range from the third to perhaps into the sixth century; they occur occasionally on bezels but usually on the other shapes. Letter forms vary from close to the inscriptional to markedly simplified; but they all share the simplified *n* and *t*. An additional normal ligature is made with the letter *alif*.

C. Cursive I (inscr. 37) is the script of official seals of the sixth century and perhaps into the seventh. Letter forms are conservative (cf. the Dura-Europos material), more so than Psalter script, which reflects the same period. Ligatures are the rule.

D. Cursive II or **Pahlavi** (inscr. 38–47) occurs in the sixth and seventh centuries and, in frozen form, thereafter. It is most frequent on domes. The script is highly cursive with streamlined letter forms.

1. For a discussion of the paleography of the monumental inscriptions, Leningrad, pp. 55–65.
2. See the beginnings of the cursive script in the Dura-Europos wall and ostraca inscriptions from the mid-third century, *CII Part III, Vol. III Dura-Europos, portfolio I*, ed. R. N. Frye (London, 1968).
3. For facsimiles, R. N. Frye, "Sasanian numbers and silver weights," *JRAS* 1973, pp. 2–11; Brunner, pp. 109–21.

Transliteration and translation of the inscriptions follows. In addition to these, three other sorts of epigraphic material occur on the seals and are discussed below: single letter or letter-like forms (inscr. a–c), pseudo-writing (d–g), and the imitation inscription of the nongenuine seal no. 12 (h). Following the serial number of each inscription is the seal and the motif number.

A. Inscriptions with Inscriptional Uncial

3 𐭪 𐭫 𐭬 𐭭 𐭮

1 (3/9 bb). bwlzwd “Burzōē.”

The name of the holder of the heraldic device is given in shortened form; see, e.g., the name in no. 39, below. The use of *d* in final position for the vowel /ē/ is notable; it supports the interpretation of one of the inscriptional verbal endings *-d* given in C. J. Brunner, *A Syntax of Western Middle Iranian* (Delmar, N.Y., 1977), pp. 209–10.

𐭪 𐭫 𐭬 𐭭 𐭮 𐭯 𐭰 𐭱 𐭲 𐭳 𐭴 𐭵 𐭶 𐭷 𐭸 𐭹 𐭺 𐭻 𐭼 𐭽 𐭾 𐭿

2 (31/1 ad). d't'wḥrmzd'n “Belonging to Dād-Ohrmazd.”

𐭪 𐭫 𐭬 𐭭 𐭮 𐭯 𐭰 𐭱 𐭲 𐭳 𐭴 𐭵 𐭶 𐭷 𐭸 𐭹 𐭺 𐭻 𐭼 𐭽 𐭾 𐭿

3 (34/1 ad). nrsky ZY b'nyk' “Narseh, the son of Bānīg.”

The final *-n* has been omitted. For the same spelling of the first name, see B.M. EO 6. The spelling b'nykn, “(royal) ladies,” occurs in the inscription ŠKZ (Middle Persian, line 33). The proper name here may be a shortened representation of an honorific referring to the goddess Anāhīd.

𐭪 𐭫 𐭬 𐭭 𐭮 𐭯 𐭰 𐭱 𐭲 𐭳 𐭴 𐭵 𐭶 𐭷 𐭸 𐭹 𐭺 𐭻 𐭼 𐭽 𐭾 𐭿

4 (22/1 ad). pylwc šḥpwḥly “Pērōz Šāpūr.”

This honorific name, “Victorious (is) Šāpūr,” probably reflects the centralization of power under King Šāpūr II (A.D. 309–79) and his ability to dominate the nobility; the same may be said of inscriptions 6 and 17. Cf. the honorific names in the ŠKZ inscription; see also A. Christensen, *L'Iran sous les Sassanides* (Copenhagen, 1944), p. 410.

𐭪 𐭫 𐭬 𐭭 𐭮 𐭯 𐭰 𐭱 𐭲 𐭳 𐭴 𐭵 𐭶 𐭷 𐭸 𐭹 𐭺 𐭻 𐭼 𐭽 𐭾 𐭿

5 (21/1 ad). ŠLMydy “Health!”

~[𐭮]𐭥𐭥𐭥𐭥 𐭮𐭥𐭮

6 (32/1 ad). klyl šhpw[h]ly “Kirdēr Šāpūr.”

I.e., “Efficacious (is) Šāpūr.” King 1885, illustrates a seal with the inscription klylyy, “efficaciousness” (pl. ix.1). As a simple adjective, kyrdyr occurs in the Parthian Manichean text M 64 V (F. W. K. Müller, *Handschriften-Reste in Estrangelo-Schrift aus Turfan, Chinesisch-Turkestan II, Anhang zu APAW* [Berlin, 1904] p. 93). It is possible to surmise that the powerful third-century priest Kirdēr is known to us by an honorific rather than by his original name; he possessed an explicit honorific, Bōxtruwān-Wahrām, “Blessed (lit., of saved soul) [is] Wahrām [I]”; see his Ka‘ba-yi Zardusht inscription (*CII Kartīr*, pls. lxxi-lxxix; ed. and tr. M.-L. Chaumont, *JA* 248 (1960), pp. 339–80), lines 8–9.

𐭥𐭥𐭥𐭥𐭥 𐭮𐭥𐭮 𐭮𐭥𐭮

7 (11/1 ad). ḥwmtry P'ty YḤWWNš “Humih. Be generous!”

𐭮𐭥𐭮𐭥𐭮𐭥

8 (117/3 fb). 'trtydy or 'twtydy

An abstract noun (cf. no. 5, above). A pseudo-archaic spelling, instead of 'drtydy, for *adardīh*, “comfort”?

𐭮𐭥𐭮𐭥𐭮 𐭮𐭥𐭮𐭥𐭮

9 (30/3 e). mštky P'y dpywr “Muštag, scribe of Ray.”

The name may be shortened; cf. the name Muštīrūz in the Islamic period (F. Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch* [Marburg, 1895], p. 90b, no. 9) and no. 23, below. Note the spelling of the city name, already in the simpler spelling also found in Pahlavi, vs. *Idy* on coins and *P'dy* in Kirdēr's Sar Mashad inscription (*Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum Part III, Vol. II, portfolio I: The Inscription of Sar-Mashad*, London, 1955; P. Gignoux, “L'Inscription de Kartir à Sar Mašhad,” *JA* 256 (1968), pp. 387–418), line 35.

𐭮𐭥𐭮𐭥𐭮 𐭮𐭥𐭮𐭥𐭮

10 (33/3 ab). lwb'n ḤZYT “Witnessed (lit., seen) by (my) spirit.”

Final -N is omitted. This type of formulation may have particular reference to the use of seals in legal and quasi-legal situations. The same inscription is on *Foroughi*, no. 202. Cf. B.M. BB 1, “Witnessed by me, [name]” and the more complex phrase of Berlin 2179, “Witnessed by (my) body, having its desire abundantly (and my) soul” (*tan ī was-kāmag ruwān dīd*). See also the Munich seal (Göbl 1973, 7d) inscribed “Tahmdēn; witnessed by my person” (*tahmdēn man bašn dīd*). B.M. BL 4 has the variant, “I will witness (by) my soul” (*gyān wēnān*).

𐬨𐬀𐬎𐬌𐬎𐬵𐬀

24 (152/3 bc). mytwm'hy "Mēdōmāh."

The name of Zoraster's cousin and first convert was also borne by the owner of B.M. HG 2. Cf. no. 45, below.

𐬨𐬀𐬎𐬌𐬎𐬵𐬀

25 (60b/2 e). l'ymt'n "Belonging to Rāymad."

The last two letters are written upside down. The unusual name "Understanding-has-come" supports the idea of a cultic context for motifs 2 d and 2 e better than no. 23 does. Cf., however, the fairly banal New Persian phrase *rāy āyad(aš)*, "May his will come (to pass)" (F. Wolff, *Glossar zu Firdosis Schahname* [Berlin, 1935], p. 25).

𐬨𐬀𐬎𐬌𐬎𐬵𐬀

26 (78 ii/2 e). w'dlzsty

Given the comparative abstractness of the name in no. 25 one, may be tempted to analyze this name as w'dlz-sty, "Having the existence of W." – whatever that might imply.

𐬨𐬀𐬎𐬌𐬎𐬵𐬀

27 (191/1 ad). l'sty "True."

The *alif* is written upside down. The inscription is appropriate to the legal and commercial context of seal use. It and the abstract *rāstih*, "truth," occur on a number of British Museum seals (B.M., p. 125). The inscription *rāst* also occurs on the reverse of some *drahm* issues, where it adorns the altar of the king's regnal fire. Its function is probably as a pious epithet of the king (cf. no. 17, above) rather than as a guarantee of the coin's value.

𐬨𐬀𐬎𐬌𐬎𐬵𐬀

28 (62/3 bc). 'ps[t]'n [']L y

=no. 15 or 19. The *L* is written upside down, and the inscription is abbreviated.

שם נכח ע כל כז ש

29 (20/3 ab).
=no. 15.

ש נכח ש נכ [.....] ח

30 (58/9 bb). 'pst'nyy ['L yzd]ty
=no. 19.

עז קו את ו כו 2

31 (196/1 ad). ḥrwt YḤYTWN
The second word is taken for YḤYTYWN. Either "Bring health!" or a p.n.,
"Brought-by-(the god) Health."

ש נו ק ש

32 (168/3 gc). 'pst'ny
Short for no. 15 or 19.

ש נו כו ש נ

33 (186/3 bc). 'pst'nyy
Short for no. 15 or 19.

ג ע ז ע נ נ ד

34 (78 iii/2 e). w'd'sdyn (?)
A number of variations could be suggested; but the name perhaps begins with
Wāy, name of the god of the atmosphere.

ש נ ע 2 ש נ כ 4

35 (102/3 bc). 'yldr (?) ḥwkl'n "A., son of Hugar."

ש כ כ ע נ

36 (5/3 gb). 'ys'gzy (?)
Presumably a p.n., but the inscription could also be merely pseudo-writing.

C. Inscription with Cursive I



- 37 (167/10 a). myšwn 'm'kl "tax administrator (lit., accountant) of Mesene."

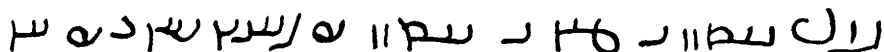
For a range of official seals, see the bullae published in *QAN*; P. Gignoux, "Les Bulles Sassanides de Qasr-i Abu Nasr," *Mémorial Jean de Menasce* (Louvain, 1974), pp. 169–87; R. Göbl, *Die Tonbullen vom Tacht-e Suleiman. Ein Beitrag zur spätsasanidischen Sphragistik* (Berlin, 1976).

D. Inscriptions with Cursive II (Pahlavi)

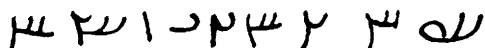


- 38 (166/3 bc). gwšnsp 'whrmzd ZY mgw ZY 'tpl't'n "Gušnasp Ohrmazd the mage, the son of A."

Several variations are possible in the patronymic.



- 39 (160/3 fa). bwlc'twr (ZY) mgw ZY 'twrpl'dyn šwlp'n "Burzādur the mage, the son of Ādurfrāyen Šawrab."



- 40 (174/2 a). 'p'ngwšnyn ZY w'yn'n "Ābāngušnēn, the son of Wāyēn."



- 41 (14/1 ab). b'p' ZY mgw ZY bg'n nrsh'n "Bābā the mage, the son of Bayān Narseh."



- 42 (153b/2h). mdy'n' ZY 'pzwn "Means of increase!"

For the frequent use of *absōn*, cf. B.M., p. 124, index.

likely to be an abbreviation. Some degree of abbreviation or of ellipsis of a common inscription has already been seen (nos. 28, 32, 33). A more radical abbreviation occurs as 'p' on Berlin 1540; and this could easily be understood as *abestān ō yazdān* (no. 15) or *abzōn* (cf. no. 42). The same abbreviation may be intended on *QAN* D.311. The reading *alif* seems assured, despite the ḥp' of *QAN* D.335, since an unambiguous ḥ (i.e., the inscriptional form) is not seen to occur alone on the seals. The single *alif* may be taken to indicate one of the two formulae just mentioned. The *QAN* bullae present a number of abbreviations as sole motifs (D.280, 282, 335, 341, 443, 444); they are perhaps the seals of minor officials. Abbreviations also seem to be worked into many of the heraldic devices, perhaps indicating honorific names. It may be suggested, similarly, that the letters *hw* on the *kulāf* of a noble (*QAN* D.103) proclaim his honorific, beginning Xu(sraw), "Renowned (is) . . ."

b (2/3 hb).

A single *y* shape or small upright crescent is at the top; at the bottom are three letter shapes, the first two crescents or *y*'s, the third an *alif*. A single *y* could be understood as an abbreviation for *yazd* (no. 13), but the presence of several suggests decorative crescents instead. The *alif* may be regarded the same as in the preceding case. (*Gorelick* 62 likewise bears both a crescent shape and an *alif*.)

c (218/3 bd).

Three distinct and two faint crescent shapes at the top. These, as in (b), seem to be decorative space fillers. They seem too regular to be intended as pseudo-writing. Cf. the markings on Leningrad 125, Berlin 886, Birmingham 75.

d (165/9 bb).

Pseudo-writing, vaguely like 'šzygd. Epigraphy generally resembling an inscription was presumably as satisfactory and authoritative, in the eyes of the illiterate majority of people, as was a correct inscription. Pseudo-writing was a labor-saving expedient for many a die-engraver in the Sasanian mints, as well as for seal-cutters.

e (60b/2 e).

Pseudo-writing: simple strokes below the left-hand figures.

f (224/1 ad).

The free space is filled with faint pseudo-writing. Occasional correct letter forms of *m* and *t* are discernible.

g (37/9 bb).

Pseudo-writing on either side of the device. The inscription must be judged from King's drawing (King 1885, pl. VIII/9), since the photograph does not show it distinctly. There is a vague resemblance to inscription no. 42.

h (65/3 fd).

Pseudo-writing at the top: y' . . y.

i (12/1 ad).

Imitation of an inscription, roughly 'tpdy. The writing is neither a correct inscription nor the freer forms of pseudo-writing, but an attempt at a plausible imitation.