

# A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON SO-CALLED ‘HATHORIC CURLS’<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The present article revisits the question of so-called ‘Hathoric curls’ and the use – and possible misuse – of the term ‘Hathoric.’ In many cases, hairstyles described as Hathoric are neither Hathoric nor Egyptian; in fact the first instances of this immediately recognisable hairstyle are to be found in Mesopotamia and Iran and pre-date the first appearances of the curls in Egypt. Furthermore, some so-called ‘Hathoric’ curls appear to be “virile” and linked to the iconography of guardian genii in the Ancient Near East.

The term ‘Hathoric curls’,<sup>2</sup> with or without quotation marks, refers to a hairstyle in which the hair ends in whorls on either side of the neck. It appears in many representations, in free-standing sculptures or in bas-reliefs, sometimes painted, in Egypt and the Ancient Near East. It is found notably on Levantine pendants depicting nude women (fig. 1),<sup>3</sup> and on cylinder seals (fig. 2)<sup>4</sup> where it is

worn by both males and females (fig. 3).<sup>5</sup> However, the term ‘Hathoric,’ associated almost systematically with this hairstyle, if not incorrect, is at least potentially problematic. It implies that the hairstyle originally belonged to the goddess Hathor



Fig. 1 Pendant representing a nude goddess from Minet el-Beidha.

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Geneviève Perriat-Bonnefois, Guillemette Andreu-Lanoë, Elisabeth David and Hélène Guichard from the Department of Egyptian Antiquities, and Sophie Cluzan from the Department of the Near Eastern Antiquities in the Louvre Museum. All my gratitude also to Dorothea Arnold and Catherine Roehrig, Department of Egyptian Art, and Joan Aruz and Sarah Graff, Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art in the Metropolitan Museum.

<sup>2</sup> Or ‘Hathoric hairstyle’.

<sup>3</sup> Pendant from Minet el-Beidha, 14<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. Gold; H: 6.5 cm, L: 2.8 cm; Musée du Louvre AO 14714. For the most recent publication: K. BENZEL, *Ornaments of Interaction: Jewelry in the Late Bronze Age*, in B. ARUZ, S. B. GRAFF, Y. RAKIC (eds.) *Cultures in Contact. From Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean in the Second Millennium*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2013, fig. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Hematite cylinder seal from the Ashmolean Museum, B. TESSIER, *Egyptian Iconography on Syro-Palestinian Cylinder Seals of the Middle Bronze Age*, OBO 11, Fribourg, Göttingen, 1996. n°200.

<sup>5</sup> Hematite cylinder seal from the British Museum, reign of Sin-Muballit (1812-1793 BC), BM 86267, D. COLLON, *First Impressions – Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East*, London, 1987, n°122.



Fig. 2 Cylinder seal impression from Middle Bronze Syria.



Fig. 3 Cylinder seal impression dating from the First Babylonian Dynasty.

and is thus of Egyptian origin. The purpose of this contribution is to review the various occurrences of this type of curled hairstyle in an attempt to trace its origins and subsequent evolutions and to give back to Hathor what is rightfully hers.

### First attestations in Egypt

In Egypt, the curled hairstyle first appeared during the Middle Kingdom (2055–1650 BC),<sup>6</sup> At that time, queens began to wear their hair in this style (fig. 4),<sup>7</sup> then ladies such as those represented on statues now in the Metropolitan Museum (fig. 5).<sup>8</sup> Many authors agree that at the beginning of the Middle Kingdom, Hathor was not yet being depict-



Fig. 4 Statue of queen Nofret.

ed with curls.<sup>9</sup> Like other goddesses, she was shown wearing the straight, tripartite wig. It was during the Middle Kingdom period that the iconography of the goddess Bat became assimilated into that of Hathor. There are no examples, however, of

<sup>6</sup> The dates for the Egyptian chronology are those cited in I. SHAW (ed.), *The Oxford History of Ancient Egypt*, Oxford, 2000, 480–489.

<sup>7</sup> Diorite; H: 165 cm. Cairo Museum JE 37487.

<sup>8</sup> Quartzite, H: 25 cm. Metropolitan Museum 33.1.5a, b. Courtesy of Do. Arnold and C. Roehrig. The two statues were found in a pits near the mastaba of Senwosretankh

at Lisht. They are now dated from the end of the Middle Kingdom (information given by Do. Arnold the 9<sup>th</sup> of October 2013).

<sup>9</sup> E. L. B. TERRACE, H. G. FISCHER, *Treasures of Egyptian Art from the Cairo Museum*, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Greenwich, 1970, 76; H. SOUROUZIAN, 'Une t ete de la reine Touy   Gourn a', *MDAIK* 37 (1981), 446, n. 4.



Fig. 5 Feminine statuette from Lisht.

<sup>10</sup> For these examples see: H. G. FISCHER, ‘The Cult and Nome of the Goddess Bat’, *JARCE* 1 (1962), 14; HAYNES, ‘Redating the Bat Capital’, *Studies in Honor of William Kelly Simpson*, vol. I, Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 399–408. See in particular the chapel of Mentuhotep Hahor II at Dendera: L. HABACHI, ‘King Nebhepetre Mentuhotep: His Monuments, Place in History, Deification and Unusual Representations in the Form of Gods’, *MDAIK* 19 (1963), fig. 8, where the goddess Hathor holds a sistrum whose handle comprises a human mask with the ears of a cow.

<sup>11</sup> HAYNES, ‘Redating the Bat Capital’, 402. Moreover, in the tomb of Oukhotep, son of Oukhotep of Meir, in the first example of capitals with a female mask with cow’s ears, the ends of the wigs are not visible.

<sup>12</sup> The expression ‘scroll wig’ is used in G. PINCH, *Votive Offerings to Hathor*, Oxford, 1993, 136.

<sup>13</sup> HAYNES, ‘Redating the Bat Capital’, 402, n. 15, 403, n. 16. See also G. BRUNTON, *Lahun I. The Treasure*, *BSAE* 27, London, 1920, fig. 8; H. E. WINLOCK, *The Treasure of El*

sistra, fetish objects, or capitals from the Eleventh or the beginning of the Twelfth Dynasties which display the distinctive curled ends.<sup>10</sup> As J. L. HAYNES reminds us, before Senusret III (1870–1831 BC), Bat does not wear a wig of any sort.<sup>11</sup>

As for Egyptian ‘Hathoric masks’, the first examples to display the curled hairstyle<sup>12</sup> may date from the second half of the Twelfth Dynasty, but they must be treated with some caution. The wooden box found at Kahun was recovered in a state of significant deterioration and reassembled from various scattered elements, so its reconstitution is hypothetical.<sup>13</sup> Even more problematic is the depiction of a sistrum held by Neferuptah, daughter of Amenemhat III (1831–1786 BC), which was reproduced on the cover of N. FARAG and Z. ISKANDER’S *The Discovery of Neferuptah*.<sup>14</sup> The image comes from the vestibule of the chapel at the temple of Medinet Maadi.<sup>15</sup> King Amenemhat III is represented on the left and is seen making an offering to the goddess Renenutet. Princess Neferuptah attends to the cult, ringing a sistrum. However, the photograph does not allow us to ascertain the presence of curls on either side of the mask of Bat depicted on the sistrum. In any event, the only really convincing example – from this period – is that of a bronze mirror found among a group of objects in a house at Kahun, which dates from the second half of the Twelfth or from the Thirteenth Dynasty<sup>16</sup>.

*Lahun*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1934, 44–45 (fig. 3). The wooden box is now to be found in the Metropolitan Museum (MMA 16.1.1).

<sup>14</sup> N. FARAG, Z. ISKANDER, *The Discovery of Neferuptah*, Cairo, 1971.

<sup>15</sup> A. VOGLIANO, *Rapporto degli scavi condotti della R. Università di Milano nella zona di Madinet Maadi (campagna inverno e primavera 1936)*, Milan, 1937, pl. XXXIV.

<sup>16</sup> W. M. F. PETRIE, A. H. SAYCE, C. HICKS, *et al.*, *Illahun, Kahun and Gurob*, London, 189, pl. XIII: 8. Petrie dates this set to the Twelfth or Thirteenth Dynasty, based on flints and stone vessels (cf. pl. XIII: 3). The stone vessels correspond to type 135 in B. G. ASTON, *Ancient Egyptian Stone Vessels. Material and Forms*, *SAGA* 5, Heidelberg, 1994, 138–139. Aston dates this same vase, based on Petrie, this time to the Twelfth Dynasty only. However, ASTON mentions a vase of the same type in the Egyptian Antiquities department in the Louvre Museum (E 25632), found at Mirgissa, dating from the Second Intermediate Period. See J. VANDIER D’ABBADIE, *Les Objets de toilette égyptiens du Musée du Louvre*, Paris, 1972, no. 296; J. VERCOUTTER, CHR. FRANÇOIS-VERNOT, *Mirgissa II. Les Nécropoles 1: description des tombes*, Paris, 1975, 55, 57, fig. 15:3. This mirror is now in the collections of the Manchester Museum (EGY 189).



Fig. 6 Lead figurine from Tell el-Ajjul.

While the hairstyle does not yet appear to be linked to the cult of the goddess Hathor, it does seem to be related to notions of sexual desire and reproduction. From the middle of the Twelfth Dynasty onward, we find the hairstyle on pottery figurines marked by distinctly sexual characteristics, placed in the tombs of men, women and children<sup>17</sup>. Although the precise role of these figurines is still being debated, researchers now agree that they are symbolic objects related to reproduction and birth, and therefore to the rebirth of the deceased.<sup>18</sup> Although this type of figurine appears in tombs from the Eleventh Dynasty onward, it is only from a slightly later period that it appears with the curled hairstyle.<sup>19</sup>



Fig. 7 Scaraboid seal bearing an Omega-shaped sign.



Fig. 8 Cylinder seal impression from the Third Dynasty of Ur.

In the Levant, the curled hairstyle appears during the Middle Bronze Age IIB (1792–1550 BC)<sup>20</sup> in images symbolising fertility, or rather sexual attraction (fig. 6).<sup>21</sup> It is worn by female characters whose pubic triangles are prominent and who are sometimes represented holding their breasts in their hands. These figures are mostly in clay and do not systematically wear the curled hairstyle. Towards the end of this period, similar female characters are represented on gold jewellery.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Figurines dating from the Twelfth or Thirteenth Dynasty, for example : Brooklyn Museum 44.226 ([http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/3481/Fertility\\_Figurine](http://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/3481/Fertility_Figurine)).

<sup>18</sup> G. PINCH, 'Childbirth and Female Figurines at Deir el-Medina and el-Amarna', *Orientalia* 52 (1983), 405–414.

<sup>19</sup> G. D. HORNBLLOWER, 'Predynastic Figures of Women and their Successors', *JEA* 15 (1929) 41. The curled hairstyle appears simultaneously on the figurines mentioned above and on statues of noblewomen.

<sup>20</sup> Corresponding to the Hyksos period in Egypt. See A. KEMPINSKI, in A. BEN-TOR (ed.), *The Archaeology of*

*Ancient Israel*, London, New Haven, 1992, 161 (table 6.1), 177 (table 6.2).

<sup>21</sup> S. SCHROER, 'Die G ttingen auf den Stempelsiegeln aus Pal stina/Israel' in O. KEEL, H. KEEL-LEU, S. SCHROER, *Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Pal stina/Israel* Bd. II, *OBO* 88, G ttingen, 1989, 174–184.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. A. BEN-TOR (ed.), *The Archaeology of Ancient Israel*, 204, fig. 6.40 ; K. BENZEL, 'Ornaments of Interaction: Jewelry in the Late Bronze Age', in B. ARUZ, S. B. GRAFF, Y. RAKIC (eds.) *Cultures in Contact. From Mesopotamia to the Mediterranean in the Second Millenium*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2013, 258–267.

Thus begins a tradition in Canaanite jewellery that endures throughout the Late Bronze Age (1550–1200 BC) (see fig. 1).

As we go further back in the timeline, we come across a particularly well-known type of seal (fig. 7), bearing an Omega-shaped sign ( $\Omega$ ). This type of seal was manufactured in the Levant and examples are to be found across northern Syria and Anatolia.<sup>23</sup> The  $\Omega$  symbol depicted on the Kassite stela, symbolising the goddess Ninur-sag, is of southern Mesopotamian origin. The first occurrences of this symbol date back to the Third Dynasty of Ur (2119–2004 BC)<sup>24</sup> (fig. 8).

### The Mesopotamian trail

Even though the Levantine images depicting so-called Hathoric curls found thus far are contemporaneous with or post-date the first Egyptian examples, they correspond to a much older tradition of Mesopotamian origin.<sup>25</sup> Representations in relief on clay plaques used for popular devotion have been dated with relative certainty to the beginning of the second millennium (the Isin-Larsa period, 2025–1887 BC)<sup>26</sup>. A number of these, now to be found in the Louvre's Near Eastern Antiquities department, come from the city of Eshnunna. Three are of particular interest for our discussion (fig. 9, 10 and 11): The first resembles the Egyptian terracotta figurines mentioned above (fig. 9) in that it conveys an idea of sexual desire and therefore, perhaps, reproduction and fertility. The second (fig. 10) shows a figure, half-man half-bull, fighting a lion. He has a bull's hindquarters, the torso and face of a man, and bovine ears, and he wears a

horned tiara, placing him in the category of divine beings. The type of genius (mythological figure) represented here has origins in images reproduced on Sumerian cylinder seals from the Mesopotamian Early Dynastic period (2900–2350 BC). The third plaque (fig. 11) is very similar to another

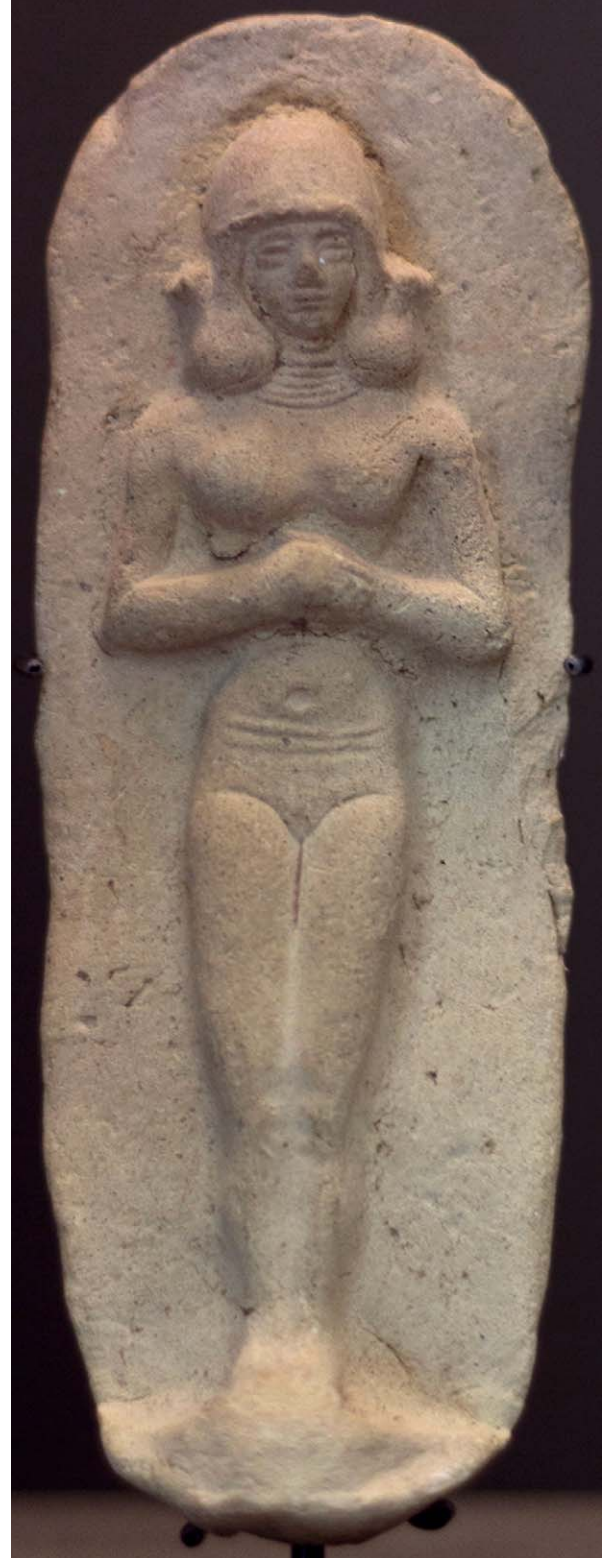


Fig. 9 Plaque representing a nude woman.

<sup>23</sup> O. KEEL, *Die  $\Omega$ -Gruppe. Ein mittelbronzezeitlicher Stempelsiegel-Typ mit erhabenem Relief aus Anatolien-Nordsyrien und Palästina*, in O. KEEL, H. KEEL-LEU, S. SCHROER, *Studien zu den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel* Bd. II, OBO 88, Göttingen, 1989, 39–87; O. KEEL, C. UEHLINGER, *Dieux, déesses et figures divines: les sources iconographiques de l'histoire de la religion d'Israël*, Paris, 2001, 35, fig. 9a.

<sup>24</sup> For this cylinder seal see: E. D. VAN BUREN, 'A Clay Relief in the Iraq Museum', *AfO* IX (1933–1934), 165–171 (fig. 3). The dates used here follow the middle chronology on which most current researchers concur.

<sup>25</sup> W. F. ALBRIGHT, 'Astarte plaques and figurines from Tell Beit Mirsim', in F. CUMONT, G. CONTENAU, A. BLANCHET, *et al.*, *Mélanges syriens offerts à M.R. Dussaud*, Paris, 1939, 107–120.

<sup>26</sup> C. UEHLINGER, *Nackte Göttin. B. In der Bildkunst, RIA* IX, 54–55.



Fig. 10 Plaque representing a bull-man.



Fig. 11 Plaquette representing a goddess framed by two crouching figures.

relief preserved in Baghdad.<sup>27</sup> It shows a goddess, wearing, not a horned tiara, but a different type of divine hairstyle, known from sculptures in the round.<sup>28</sup> A head sprouts from each shoulder, allowing us to recognise her as a goddess who presides over births (Ninhursag or Ninmah).<sup>29</sup> Symmetrically arranged on either side of her are two identical showing a diminutive figure crouching under a stretched  $\Omega$ -shaped sign. This sign, already mentioned above (fig. 7 and 8), appears here as a symbol of the uterus. The figures crouched below it are thought to be human beings called to be born.<sup>30</sup>

The Mesopotamian origins of the curled hairstyle have been mentioned on numerous occasions since they were first noted by W. F. ALBRIGHT.<sup>31</sup> However, the curls are still described as ‘Hathoric’ even when worn by characters in the Canaanite, Syrian or Anatolian traditions<sup>32</sup>. More worryingly, this erroneous adjective has consistently led commentators to see the hairstyle as an illustration of Egyptian influence and to fail to take sufficient account of any other iconographic tradition. However, by following the eastern trail, we see that the curls are present in numerous representations that seem to owe nothing to foreign influence. This research leads us to Iran and to periods well before the second millennium BC.

### Upturned hairstyles in the Ancient Near East

Mesopotamian hairstyles forming spirals or loops on either side of the neck are similar to those worn by Egyptian ladies of the Middle Kingdom (2055–1650 BC), but most of the Mesopotamian representations are earlier, dating from the Neo-Sumerian period (2150–2003 BC).<sup>33</sup> For example,

<sup>27</sup> Iraq Museum 9574.

<sup>28</sup> E. D. VAN BUREN, ‘A Clay Relief in the Iraq Museum’, *AfO* IX (1933–1934), 167.

<sup>29</sup> U. SEIDL, Muttergöttin – B. I. *Ikönographie*, RIA VIII, 513–519.

<sup>30</sup> J. A. BLACK, A. GREEN, T. RICKARDS, *Gods, Demons and Symbols in Ancient Mesopotamia: An Illustrated Dictionary* (London, 1992), 132.

<sup>31</sup> W. F. ALBRIGHT, *Astarte plaques*; J. B. PRITCHARD, *Palestinian Figurines in relation to certain goddesses known through literature*, New Haven, 1943, 41; G. PINCH, *Votive Offerings to Hathor*, 136; HAYNES, *Redating the Bat Capital*, 403.

<sup>32</sup> S. SCHROER, *Die Göttin auf den Stempelsiegeln aus Palästina/Israel*, 183–189.

<sup>33</sup> A. SPYCKET, La coiffure féminine en Mésopotamie. Des origines à la I<sup>re</sup> dynastie de Babylone, *RA* 48/4, 1954, fig. 65–68.



Fig. 12 Bas-relief possibly representing the goddess Ba'u.



Fig. 14 Neo-Sumerian statuette of a sitting human-faced bull.



Fig. 13 Seal impression of Ishkumarakkum.

a relief depicting the goddess Ba'u wearing her hair in this style dates from the reign of Gudea of Lagash (2141–2122 BC) (fig. 12). The major difference between the early Mesopotamian images and the later Egyptian Middle Kingdom images is the presence of other curls on the shoulders. In the Egyptian images, the hair is divided into three strands, the largest mass of hair falling on the back, the other two forming whorls on the chest. The convention of the three strands had existed since the Egyptian Predynastic period, as shown by G. D. HORNBLLOWER.<sup>34</sup> However, Hornblower believed that the Egyptian curled wig also derived from the predynastic period. In fact there is no known predynastic representation where the two hair strands falling on the chest end in volutes or whorls: at this period, Egyptian hair is consistently shown in straight strands. The fashion for curling up the hair had its origins in eastern artistic con-



Fig. 15 Statuette of a lion in human posture, so-called ‘Guennol lioness’.

vention, as we shall see in the following paragraphs.

The Mesopotamian manner of representing locks of hair follows a tradition that has been dated to the time of the Early Dynastic Period (2900–2350 BC), as in the fragment of a basalt

<sup>34</sup> G. D. HORNBLLOWER, *Predynastic Figures of Women and their Successors*, *JEA* 15 (1929), 29–47.

vase in the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin which shows the goddess Nanshe's face.<sup>35</sup> In Mesopotamian art, unlike Egyptian representations, strands of hair frequently end in coiled loops. Representations *en face*, quite rare in relief, often (though not always) show two pairs of locks, one rolling outwards on either side of the neck, and a further pair sitting on the shoulders which also roll outwards (fig. 13). This artistic convention is linked mainly, although not exclusively, to female deities;<sup>36</sup> certain statuettes of human-headed bulls also have this hairstyle (fig. 14).

In the earlier Proto-Elamite period (3100–2800 BC), two curls can be seen on the back of the Guennol Lioness statuette, a major work of the period (fig. 15). A. BENOIT, quoting P. AMIET, describes them as ‘a Baroque detail characteristic of the period’.<sup>37</sup> Around this time, human representations disappear and give way to images of animals in human postures. The lioness has a martial air, tensing the muscles in its forelegs and shoulders, head turned sideways. Bulls in the same posture are represented on a cylinder seal impression from Susa (fig. 16).<sup>38</sup> On the back of the bull on the left-hand side hang two strands of hair, ending in similar curls. It would seem justified to make a connection between these locks of hair and those observed on the shoulders and backs of gods and guardian spirits found from Mesopotamia through Anatolia to the Levant. From the third millennium BC onwards, gods and goddesses are depicted with the same curled strands of hair on Akkadian (2350–2200 BC) and Neo-Sumerian (2250–2004 BC) cylinder seals.

In the Middle Bronze Age, the development of Assyrian trade in Cappadocia brings the use of



Fig. 16 Proto-Elamite Cylinder seal impression from Susa.



Fig. 17 Cylinder seal impression from K ultepe-Kanesh.

cylinder seals, cuneiform writing and certain symbols and iconographies to Anatolia. The first K ultepe seals often represent the bull-man and the bearded hero, which appear on Mesopotamian seals from the Early Dynastic period onwards. Both these figures have the same curled hairstyle, usually simplified into two symmetrical coils on either side of the neck (fig. 17)<sup>39</sup>. The curled wig was adopted by Egyptian noblewomen during the reign of Amenemhat II (1911–1877 BC)<sup>40</sup> at around the time that Montu's treasure was buried in the temple at Tod.<sup>41</sup> Some items in this treasure trove come from Anatolia, others from southern Meso-

<sup>35</sup> Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin: Inv. Nr. VA 7248. J. M. ASHER GREVE, J. GOODNICK WESTENHOLZ, *Goddesses in Context. On Divine Powers, Roles, Relationships and Gender in Mesopotamian Textual and Visual Sources*, OBO 259, G ottingen, fig. 7.

<sup>36</sup> J. M. ASHER GREVE, The Gaze of Goddesses: On Divinity, Gender, and Frontality in the Late Early Dynastic, Akkadian, and Neo-Sumerian Periods, *NIN* 4/1 (2003) 1–59.

<sup>37</sup> A. BENOIT, *Art et arch eologie: les Civilisations du Proche-Orient ancien*, Manuels de l'Ecole du Louvre, Paris, 2003, 215, quoting P. AMIET, *L' age des  echanges inter-iraniens, 3500–1700 av. J.-C.*, Paris, 1986, 95. [Author's translation].

<sup>38</sup> H. PITTMAN, Proto-Elamische Kunstperiode, *RIA* XI, fig. 2.a ; see also fig. 11.a and b.

<sup>39</sup> N.  OZG UC, *K ultepe m uh ur baskılarında anadolu grubu: the Anatolian group of cylinder seal impressions from K ultepe*, Ankara, 1965) pl. XIX, n o57.

<sup>40</sup> F. BISSON DE LA ROQUE, Le tr esor de T od, *CdE* 23 (1937), 21–27; K.R. MAXWELL-HYSLOP, A note on the Anatolian connection of the Tod treasure, *Anatolian Studies* 45 (1995), 243–250; G. PIERRAT-BONNEFOIS, The Tod Treasure, in J. ARUZ, K. BENZEL, and J. M. EVANS, (eds), *Beyond Babylon. Art, trade, and diplomacy in the Second Millennium B.C.*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2009, 65–66; M. CASANOVA, G. PIERRAT-BONNEFOIS, QUENET PH., et al., Lapis Lazuli of the T od Treasure: A New Investigation, in *Proceedings of the Xth International Congress of Egyptologists, 22–29 Mai 2008, Rhodes (Greece)*, OLA, Louvain, Paris, Dudley, forthcoming.

<sup>41</sup> The warrior god Montu is named ‘master of the foreign countries’, Hathor is named ‘mistress of the foreign countries’.



potamia or Iran. All of them had to pass through the Levant to arrive in Egypt. One of the most plausible hypotheses is that they were taken through the port of Byblos: Amenemhat II's annals mention the arrival of two Egyptian boats returning from Lebanon in the first year of the king's reign.<sup>42</sup> The treasure of Tod is one of the best illustrations of the fact that the Levant was the essential intermediary between the Aegean, Anatolian, Mesopotamian and Egyptian worlds. It would seem probable, thus, that iconography relating to the curled hairstyle came from Susa and Southern Mesopotamia via the Levant to Middle Kingdom Egypt. However, no Levantine image as old as the Middle Bronze Age IIA (2000–1760 BC)<sup>43</sup> has yet been found.

### **Canaanite, Syrian and Anatolian curls in the Middle Bronze Age: the development of an iconography and its influence on Egyptian art**

A little later, during the Middle Bronze Age IIB (1792–1550 BC), the Canaanites began to manufacture the gold pendants mentioned above.<sup>44</sup> Anatolia was still in contact with Mesopotamia, Northern Syria and the Aegean. The same period saw developments in Syrian glyptics and ivory workshops in Acemhöyük in which a Levantine, rather than an Egyptian, influence is visible. Thus, although often described as ‘Hathoric’,<sup>45</sup> the curls worn by the guardian spirits depicted on the George D. Pratt ivories in the Metropolitan Museum<sup>46</sup> (fig. 18 and 19) actually convey an old iconography inherited in Syria from Iran and Mesopotamia: that of the locks on the back, worn by characters who embody ideas of ‘virility’ and power, such as the Guennol lioness, guardian animals or heroes in combat (fig. 15 to 17). Another

example is the sphinx represented in relief on the vase from Karahöyük which is conserved in the Museum of Konya.<sup>47</sup> It has a beard and curly locks on either side of its neck, like the Mesopotamian human-headed bull. Far from being ‘Hathoric’, these curls appear to be related to the above-cited notions of virility. Similarly, it is surely not coincidental that the posture of the Pratt bull-man (Fig. 19) closely resembles that of the Guennol Lioness. As for the Sphinx (fig. 18), it has the body of a sitting lion, its tail standing vertically; it finds its parallels in the Ancient Near East, not in Egypt.<sup>48</sup>

At the end of the Twelfth Dynasty in Egypt, the wig featuring two curled ends, once reserved for ladies-in-waiting and queens, is incorporated into images related to toiletries and seduction. This plunges the motif into the realm of life after death – both the figurines themselves and decorated toiletries were placed in tombs alongside the deceased. Henceforth, there is a marked link between the curled hairstyle and images relating to sexuality and fecundity. This probably serves to explain the previous attribution of this hairstyle to Levantine goddesses and, by virtue of her common association with them, to Hathor herself. The first known instances of an association of the curled hairstyle with a feminine mask (with cow's ears) are the box and mirror mentioned above<sup>49</sup>, one found in the necropolis of El-Lahun, the other in the nearby city, where archaeological research has uncovered the presence of a foreign community of Levantine origin.<sup>50</sup>

### **Curled hairstyles and the goddess Hathor in the Late Bronze Age**

It is particularly from the Late Bronze Age onwards that the goddess Hathor is represented

<sup>42</sup> H. ALTENMÜLLER, M. MOUSSA, Die Inschrift Amenemhats II. aus dem Ptah-Tempel von Memphis. Ein Vorbericht, *Studien zur altägyptischen Kultur* 19 (1991), 1–48.

<sup>43</sup> That is to say, contemporaneous with the time in which the curled wig appears in the Egyptian court.

<sup>44</sup> *Supra*, n. 20.

<sup>45</sup> M.J. MELLINK, The Pratt Ivories in the Metropolitan Museum of Art-Kerma-Chronology and the Transition from Early Bronze to Middle Bronze, *AJA* 73 (1969), 285–287; J. ARUZ, Central Anatolian Ivories, in *Beyond Babylon*, 82.

<sup>46</sup> MELLINK, *The Pratt Ivories*; most recently: E. SIMPSON, An Early Anatolian Ivory Chair: The Pratt Ivories in The Metropolitan Museum of Art, in R. B. KOEHL (ed.), *AMILLA. The Quest for Excellence, Studies Presented to*

*Guenter Kopcke in Celebration of His 75<sup>th</sup> birthday*, Philadelphia, 2013, 221–261.

<sup>47</sup> See *Beyond Babylon*, 82 (cat. 81), 142–141.

<sup>48</sup> We can cite examples such as the guardian lion in basalt found at the temple of Enki in Eridu, which dates from the Neo-Sumerian period. See P. AMIET, *L'art antique du Moyen-Orient*, Paris, 1977, fig. 406. Even further back in time, and further east, we might also include a Proto-Elamite seal impression: see D. COLLON, *First Impressions – Cylinder Seals in the Ancient Near East*, London, 1987, n°933.

<sup>49</sup> *Supra*, n. 14.

<sup>50</sup> U. LUFT, Asiatics in Illahun: A preliminary report, in *Sesto Congresso internazionale di egittologia*, II, Turin, 1992–1993, 291–297.

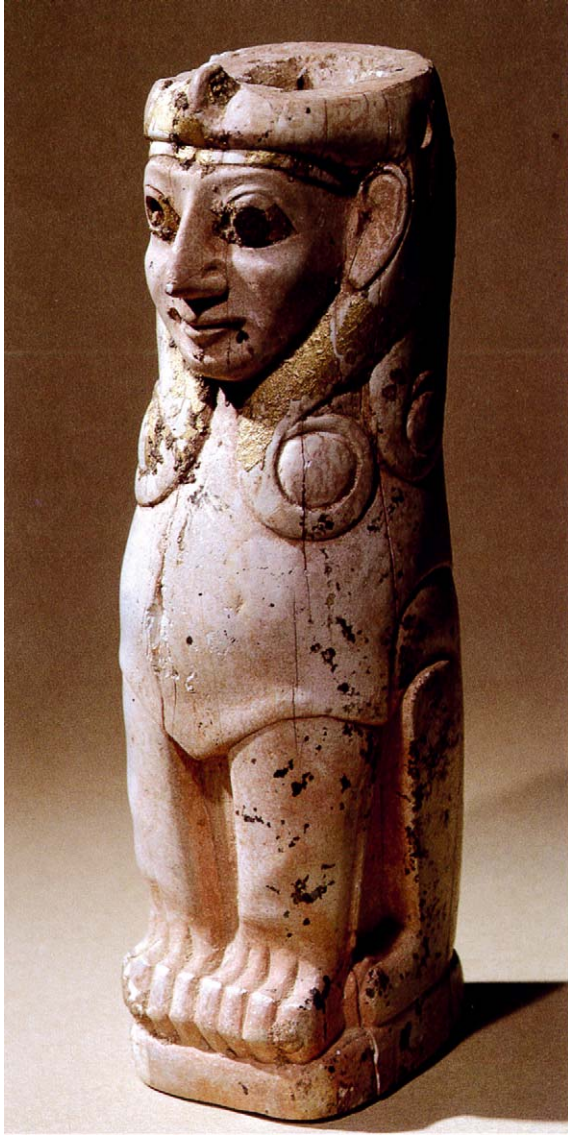


Fig. 18 Furniture support in sphinx form.

wearing the volute wig. It is far from being a consistent attribute the goddess, however. It appears mainly on religious objects such as clappers and sistra and sometimes on decorative and architectural elements such as 'sistrum capitals'. It can also be seen on objects found in temples and chapels dedicated to the Hathoric cult, such as the blue bowls and the sistra with 'Hathoric masks' that appear in the Eighteenth Dynasty.<sup>51</sup> However, the traditional Egyptian wig consisting of straight locks of hair was still much used in the New Kingdom and when Hathor is represented in bas-relief

<sup>51</sup> So-called 'Noun bowls', based on E. CHR. STRAUSS, *Die Nun-Schale*, *MÄS* 30 (1974). It seems, however, that 'marsh bowls' would be a better designation. Regarding



Fig. 19 Ivory plaque representing a bull-man.

and sculpted in the round, she is always shown wearing the straight wig.

On the other hand, goddesses considered Levantine, who are represented in the main *en face*, in similar postures to the naked goddesses depicted on Canaanite jewellery, are systematically shown wearing the curled wig. These goddesses are often called Qadesh in Egyptian, from the Semitic root denoting 'holiness'. It should be noted that it is only in Egypt that they are given this

the link with the Hathoric cult, see G. PINCH, *Votive Offerings to Hathor*, 138 and 311–313.



Fig. 20 Bed decorative pannel from the royal palace of Ugarit.

name and that these are Egyptianised versions of the great Levantine goddesses. In New Kingdom Egypt, Qadesh is represented as a mistress of animals, an image intended to protect against disease and all forms of evil.<sup>52</sup>

In the Near East, the tradition of feminine locks continues during the Late Bronze Age, as evidenced by Canaanite gold pendants (fig. 1).<sup>53</sup> The motif also appears on rarer objects like the votive axe from Ain Jarra conserved in the Department of Near Eastern Antiquities at the Louvre. One side of the axe displays the same iconography as the gold pendants while the other seems more closely related to Mesopotamian iconographies of the goddess Ishtar.<sup>54</sup> The motif can be compared to the depiction of the hair of the goddess shown breastfeeding the king and his double represented on the panel of a bed found in Ugarit and conserved at the Museum of Damascus (fig. 20).<sup>55</sup> In ivory, feminine locks can be seen as decorative elements of boxes discovered in the

Levant, notably from Hazor<sup>56</sup>, Egypt and Cyprus<sup>57</sup>. If heads on *sistra* can be related to Hathor, the feminine heads discovered in Megiddo<sup>58</sup> and now conserved in Chicago did not necessarily bear the same symbolic meaning. Whether in ivory or in faience, the hathoric *sistrum* iconography seems linked to the connection between Egypt and the Levant. It would seem clear, thus, that Hathor's hairstyle is a case of eastern iconography influencing representations in New Kingdom Egypt rather than *vice versa*.

Finally, we come to Near-Eastern genii, heroes and guardians, represented as sphinxes, human-headed bulls or bull-men; these are also shown wearing their hair in a curled style. When such characters are represented frontally, they often have two curled locks on either side of the neck, as can be seen on a seal impression from Nuzi (fig. 21) which shows the heads of two bearded men with bull ears.<sup>59</sup> These heroes can be compared to paintings from the palace of Nuzi

<sup>52</sup> LÄ, V, Qadesh (Götting), col. 26.

<sup>53</sup> *Supra*, n. 20.

<sup>54</sup> M.-Th. BARRELET, Deux déesses syro-phéniciennes sur un bronze du Louvre, *Syria* 35 (1985), 27–44; J. GACHET-BIZOLLON, Le panneau de lit en ivoire de la cour III du palais royal d'Ougarit, *Syria* 78 (2001), 19–82.

<sup>55</sup> W. A. WARD, La Déesse nourricière d'Ougarit, *Syria* 46 (1969), 225–239.

<sup>56</sup> A. BEN-TOR, A Decorated Jewellery Box from Hazor, *Tel Aviv* 36, 2009, 5–67.

<sup>57</sup> A. BEN-TOR, A Decorated Box from in The Collections of The Bible Lands Museum of Jerusalem, *Ä&L* 22, 2012–2013, 317–338.

<sup>58</sup> A. BEN-TOR, 'A Decorated Jewellery Box from Hazor', *Tel Aviv* 36, 2009, fig. 30.a.

<sup>59</sup> H. U. STEYMANS, *Gilgamesch. Ikonographie eines Helden. Gilgamesch, Epic and Iconography* (OBO 245; Fribourg, 2011), fig. 23.



Fig. 21 Cylinder seal impression from Nuzi.

(fig. 22): bucrane are represented next to bovine heads wearing wigs with curled ends. The Hittite Sphinxes, guardians of Yerkapı in Hattusha (one of which is in the Istanbul Archaeological Museum,<sup>60</sup> also have a curled hairstyle. When heroes or guardian animals are represented in the round or in profile, they are often shown with several curled locks. The same goes for the sphinx represented on the carved horn which was discovered in the royal palace of Ugarit and which is conserved in the National Museum of Damascus (fig. 23), or the wigged sphinx carved on the syro-hittite box found in Megiddo<sup>61</sup>.

The tradition of depicting guardian animals with this particular curled hairstyle continues throughout the first millennium BC: on a protome of a sphinx in basalt found at Tell Tayinat and conserved in the Oriental Institute in Chicago<sup>62</sup>, and

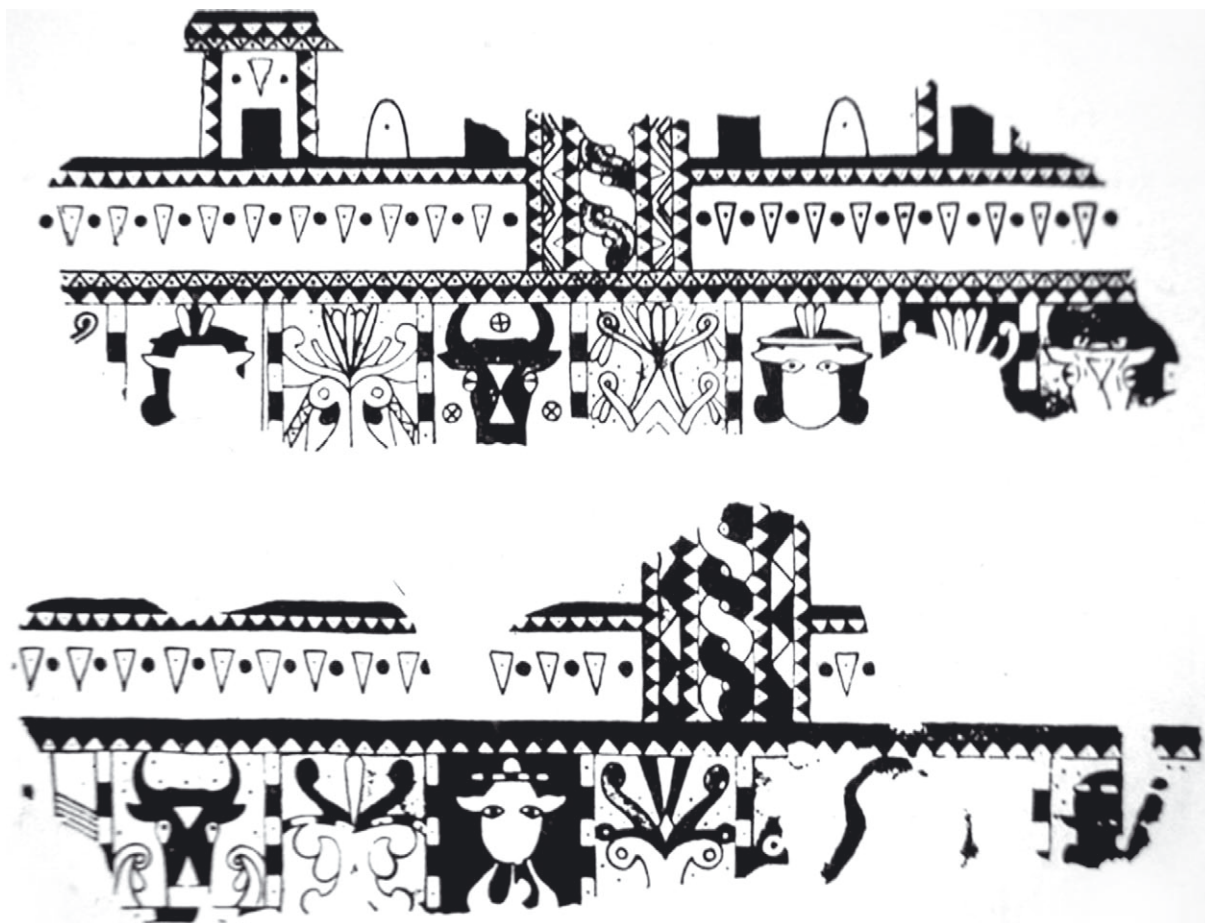


Fig. 22 Reproduction of the wall painting found in the palace of Nuzi.

<sup>60</sup> The other, exhibited since 1915 in the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin, has recently been returned to Turkey, now exhibited together in the Boğazk oy Museum:  . YAZICI (ed.), 2013, *The Hittite Capital Hattusa, Alacah y k and Shapinuwa, The Ancient Cities 1*, Istanbul, 67.

<sup>61</sup> Chicago Oriental Institute Museum A 22292. R.L. ALEXANDER, Shausga and The Hittite Ivory from Megiddo, *JNES* 50/3, 1991, 161–182.

<sup>62</sup> Chicago Oriental Institute Museum A 27853.



Fig. 23 Sculpted tusk found in the Royal Palace at Ugarit.

on orthostats from the temple of Ain Dara which show a winged human-headed sphinx.<sup>63</sup> All these three examples are more or less contemporaneous.

As for Egyptian Hathoric capitals, masks represented here do not always have curled wigs, as J. L. HAYNES has shown.<sup>64</sup> During the first millennium BC, however, the hairstyle is more frequently represented and associated with the goddess Hathor, which probably contributed to maintaining a certain ambiguity and the creation of anachronistic connections.<sup>65</sup> In Cyprus, the depiction of divine figures wearing curled hairstyles developed between the Late Bronze Age (1550–1100 BC) and the beginning of the first millennium.<sup>66</sup> Carbillet rightly emphasises the mixed Egypto-Levantine nature of these syncretic goddess and shows that archaeological evidence indicates the predominant role of the Levant, and thus a lesser Egyptian role, in the diffusion of ‘Hathoric’ images.

### Three trails to pursue further

Let us now look afresh at the cylinder seal from the British Museum, which we cited at the beginning of this contribution (fig. 3). On the print produced by the seal, different hairstyles are worn by three different character types. In each hairstyle, however, a lock of hair curls on either side of the neck or the chest. Until now, all three hairstyles have been called ‘Hathoric’. However, each hairstyle represents a different iconographic tradition and we must distinguish between them if we are not to misinterpret the images or make incongruous comparisons.<sup>67</sup>

On the right hand side of the seal, we see the goddess Ishtar. Her hair forms two strands, one curled on each shoulder. Here we recognise the first Near-Eastern tradition of the curled hairstyle: this is the Mesopotamian way of representing locks of hair,<sup>68</sup> in the same way that there are Mesopotamian ways of representing beards or animals’ fur. The second tradition, which may be a derivative of the first, is represented by the female

<sup>63</sup> K. KOHLMAYER, Building Activities and Architectural Decoration in The 11<sup>th</sup> Century BC. The Temples of Taita, King of Palasatini/Palistin in Aleppo and ‘Ain Dara’, in K. STROBEL (ed.), *Empires after the Empire: Anatolia, Syria and Assyria after Suppiluliuma (ca.1200–800/700 B.C.)*, Eothen, 2010, 255–280.

<sup>64</sup> See J. L. HAYNES, *Redating the Bat Capital*.

<sup>65</sup> Sistra dating from the Late Period (664–332 BC). Cf. Musée du Louvre E 1780.

<sup>66</sup> A. CARBILLET, *La Figure hathorique à Chypre (II<sup>e</sup>-I<sup>er</sup> millénaire)*, Münster 2011.

<sup>67</sup> While distinguishing between these different traditions for the sake of analysis, it ought not necessarily to be concluded that these distinctions were as clear to artists of the Ancient Near East.

<sup>68</sup> One of the earliest examples is the goddess Nanshe represented *en face* on the Enmetena vase fragment conserved in the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin cf. *Supra*, note 33.

figure standing *en face*, her hands under her breasts. She is a symbol of fertility and sexuality. Whether a divine figure or not, the representation seems to have had its origins in Mesopotamia before being adopted by the Levantine world. It is possible that her hair is a wig. The third tradition is represented by the isolated mask of a human-headed figure with bull ears. The figure conveys a complex symbolism, linked to the forces of nature and their struggle within the cosmos. It is also linked to the protection of sacred trees, palaces and temples. The mask is shown with what might be described as ‘virile’ locks, like those seen on the Guennol Lioness and other genii of the Proto-Elamite period.

The locks are found on the backs of gods and heroes represented in profile, first on third millennium Mesopotamian cylinder seals, then on Syrian cylinder seals during the Middle Bronze Age,<sup>69</sup> and later on the shoulders of the god Baal and on sphinxes,<sup>70</sup> such as those of Hattusha or Alacah oy uk (fig. 18). Egyptian curled wigs, or curled hairstyles as they should be called, derive from the second tradition mentioned above. Associated with sexual desire, fertility and reproduction, the curled locks were worn by the goddess Hathor, who embodied this association. Hathor – the goddess and the name – arrived on Levantine soil as a result of trade between Egypt and Byblos from the third millennium onwards and became equated with Baalat Gebal, the local form of the great Levantine goddess.<sup>71</sup> This is why the curls remained in depictions of the Levantine goddesses worshipped in Egypt during the New Kingdom.

In conclusion, and in order to understand how representations so tangentially related to Hathor have in the past been described as having ‘Hathoric hairstyles’, it is appropriate to consider one particularly illuminating final example, that of a wooden box conserved in the Department of Egyptian Antiquities at the Louvre. This box shows two heads both of which have curled wigs



Fig. 24 Box with pivoting lid from a tomb at Gurob.

(fig. 24).<sup>72</sup> The object itself was found in a tomb in the vicinity of Gurob and described for the first time by E CHASSINAT.<sup>73</sup> Chassinat draws parallels between the iconography of the sphinxes and *palmettes* on the box and that of the first millennium ivories found in Assyria. Leaving aside the anachronism of this comparison, we need to consider Chassinat’s conclusion about the role of Levantine peoples in iconographic transmission. For Chassinat, Assyrian ivories are of Egyptian origin and the Levant is a transitional zone: ‘Phoenicia’, he writes, ‘was sometimes used as an intermediary between distant nations, [but] it did not, as has been wrongly assumed, have its own a creative role in the production of the goods that it sold everywhere. Its artistic development was almost non-existent or was, at least, hampered by the commercial interests that were its sole concern’.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>69</sup> For example, the cylinder seal conserved in the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York : P. AMIET, *L’art antique du Moyen-Orient*, 438, fig. 789.

<sup>70</sup> Stela depicting the storm god Baal, found on the Acropolis at Ugarit and conserved in the Department of Near Eastern Antiquities at the Louvre Museum. AO 15775.

<sup>71</sup> ESPINEL A. Diego, The Role of the Temple of Ba’alat Gebal as Intermediary Between Egypt and Byblos During the Old Kingdom, *SAK* 30, 2002, 103–119 ; LAGARCE-OTTHMAN B., *La Divinit  au Proche-Orient et en  gypte aux III<sup>e</sup> et*

*IV<sup>e</sup> mill naires avant J.-C. Etude comparative*, Th se pour obtenir le grade de Docteur de l’Universit  Paris-Sorbonne, sous la direction de Dominique Valbelle, soutenue le 9 novembre 2013, 153, 269–270.

<sup>72</sup> Reign of Amenhotep IV (1352–1336 BC). Wood; L: 13.8 cm. Louvre Museum E 11041.

<sup>73</sup> E. CHASSINAT, Une Tombe inviol e de la XVIII<sup>e</sup> dynastie d couverte aux environs de Medinet el-Gorab dans le Fayoum, *BIFAO* 1 (1901), 229.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.

This extract is perfect testimony of the prejudices that existed in an era of pioneering Eastern and Egyptian archaeology and which persist today more or less unconsciously. These prejudices are of two types: firstly, a kind of faith in Egyptian genius as a unique and, above all, independent artistic source. Secondly, and perhaps more prominently, the notion that the 'Phoenicians' did not create anything, as they were too busy trading and getting rich (the idea relayed, for example, by Chassinat and E. Renan.)<sup>75</sup> Levantine peoples commercialism *versus* Egypt's genius: an old prejudice but one which needs to be kept in mind if we

are to explain the propensity of researchers, both in Egyptology and in Ancient Near Eastern archaeology, to see Syro-Anatolian and Canaanite works of art as imitations only – and imitations which, for the most part, are 'Egyptianizing'. The primary focus of this contribution has been a systematic exploration of the oriental origins of Levantine art but it has also sought to rehabilitate the Levant as a source of artistic creativity in its own right, complete with its own characteristics, regional variations and, particularly, an ability to influence neighbouring areas of artistic production.

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<sup>75</sup> E. RENAN, *Mission de Phénicie*, Paris, 1864, 822.

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