

The Standard of the *maliktum* of Ebla in the Royal Archives Period*

by Paolo Matthiae – Rome

In a peripheral room of the Administrative Quarter of the Royal Palace G at Ebla, Early Bronze IVA (ca. 2400–2300 BC), two miniature statues of females were found on the floor: one is a standing figure of silver, steatite, and wood, and the other one is a seated figure of gold, steatite, limestone, and wood. These nearly intact images are masterpieces of the miniature art of the very end of Early Dynastic IIIB, and probably belonged to a precious ceremonial standard of an Ebla queen. The proposal is that the standard represented the homage paid by queen Tabur-Damu, the last Ebla king Ishar-Damu's wife, to a funerary statue of the deceased queen mother Dusigu.

The archaeological exploration of the Royal Palace G of Early Bronze IVA Ebla (ca 2400–2300 BC) started in 1973 with a sounding on the west slope of the Acropolis. After the discovery of the Royal Archives in the Administrative Quarter in 1975 and 1976,¹ it was completed in its basic elements in 1982, with the enlargements in the sectors of the Southern Quarter,² and some important complements of the excavations were made in the years 2003–2007 in some peripheral sectors, in view of the

* The delicate and difficult restoration of the two statuettes I present here was made by Chiara Omodei Zorini, whom I wish to thank deeply for her engagement and for the excellent results. Alessandro Colantoni, who was responsible for the excavation in 2007 of Sector G North with Daniele Putorti's co-operation, recovered the two statuettes with great accuracy. My deepest gratitude goes to Maria Giovanna Biga for several bits of information from the Royal Archives texts, to Frances Pinnock for the useful discussions about different iconographic aspects of the two figures, to Gabriella Scandone for the identification of the bronze incense-burner, and to Halil Hamid for the drawing of the individual pieces and of the reconstruction I propose. Of course, the author bears full responsibility for the considerations presented here, and for any possible mistake. Note the following abbreviation: CRAIBL = Académie des Inscriptions & Belles-lettres: Comptes rendus (Paris).

¹ P. Matthiae, Ebla. Un impero ritrovato. Dai primi scavi alle ultime scoperte. 3rd ed. (Torino 1995 [1989]) 69–94.

² Id., Recherches archéologiques à Ebla, 1977: Le Quartier Administratif du Palais Royal G, CRAIBL (1978) 204–36, fig. 1–20; id., Fouilles de Tell Mardikh-Ebla en 1982: Nouvelles recherches sur l'architecture palatine d'Ebla, CRAIBL (1983) 542–54, fig. 8–16.

arrangement of the whole Royal Palace G area within the frame of the Archaeological Park of Ebla.³

These further excavations were mainly devoted to: a) the west room, L.2982, of the pair located south of the Throne Room L.2866;⁴ b) the accomplishment of the excavation of the Throne Room L.2866 itself, in the east sector, with the discovery of three small inner rooms, L.8495, L.8778, L.8496;⁵ c) reaching everywhere in the west the limit of preservation of the floor of the Audience Court L.2752; d) the exploration of the Northern Quarter, including rooms L.9593, L.9330 and L.9583, behind the north façade of the Audience Court (Fig. 1).⁶

Moreover, as far as the architectural structures of Ebla in the Royal Archives period are concerned, the Chapel of the Painted Plaster, with its possible cultic or ceremonial function, was found south of the Southern Quarter, albeit quite damaged by the superimposition of the north sector of the Southern Palace of Middle Bronze II (ca 1800–1600 BC): several fragments of painting were found in it, with geometric patterns – lozenges, rosettes, labyrinths, triangles, and others –, clearly belonging to a large niche with multiple recesses, which constitute the oldest remains of wall paintings in western inner Syria.⁷

³ Id., *Le Palais Méridional dans la Ville Basse d'Ebla paléosyrienne: Fouilles à Tell Mardikh* (2002–2003), CRAIBL (2004) 301–17, fig. 1–17; id., *Un grand temple de l'époque des Archives dans l'Ebla protosyrienne: Fouilles à Tell Mardikh 2004–2005*, CRAIBL (2006) 452–58, fig. 4–8; id., *The Temple of the Rock of Early Bronze IVA–B at Ebla: Structure, Chronology, Continuity*, in 5 ICAANE, Madrid 2006, II (2009) 547–570; M. Ramazzotti, *The Ebla Archaeological Park: Project and Results*, in: J. Abdul Messih (ed.), *Résultats du programme de formation à la sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel de Syrie, 2002–2004* (2007) 281–294. On the present state of knowledge of the Royal Palace G see now P. Matthiae, *Gli Archivi Reali di Ebla. La scoperta, i testi, il significato* (Roma 2008) 41–61.

⁴ Matthiae, CRAIBL (2004) 310–17, fig. 7–17.

⁵ Id., CRAIBL (2006), 452–58, fig. 4–8; M. Ramazzotti, *Royal Administration during the Conquest. New Archaeological and Epigraphic Discoveries in the Royal Palace G at Ebla/Tell Mardikh*, in: 52 RAI, Münster 2006, in press.

⁶ The structural elements thus far brought to light in the Northern Quarter of the Royal Palace G are located in squares DiV8i+ii and DiV8iii+iv, north of the corridor L.9328 behind the great façade of the Court of Audience, excavated in 1975, about which see P. Matthiae, *Le Palais Royal protosyrien d'Ebla: Nouvelles recherches archéologiques à Tell Mardikh en 1976*, CRAIBL (1977) 149–57, fig. 3, 5. About the 2007 excavations, which allowed to complete the exploration of rooms L.9330 and L.9583, and to identify the west room L.9593, see P. Matthiae, *Temples et reines de l'Ebla protosyrienne: Résultats des fouilles à Tell Mardikh en 2007–2008*, CRAIBL (2009) in press.

⁷ Matthiae, CRAIBL (2004) 417–26, fig. 18–26. See also M. Ramazzotti/A. Di Ludovico, *Reconstructing the Ancient Painted Generative Grammar. An Experimental Analysis on the EB IVA “FF2 Building” Decorative System Recently Discovered at Ebla-Tell Mardikh (Syria)*, paper presented at 5 ICAANE, Madrid 2006.

These complements to the exploration of the Royal Palace G, however limited in extension, allowed to reach some important results in the knowledge of the structures of basic sectors of the Administrative Quarter of the Palace complex.

First of all, we were able to ascertain that the Throne Room L.2866, opening into the small inner court L.2913, included, on the one hand, as has been said, three small rooms built inside in the east sector, with a technique quite alike that of the Great Archive L.2769, where some Archive documents were temporarily kept before the final placement in L.2769.⁸ On the other hand, two nearly square rooms joined it to the south, L.2984 to the east, and L.2982 to the west, which were entered by means of a door opening into the south side of the hall, certainly near the lost royal dais. These two quite large rooms communicated only with the Throne Room, and were totally separated from the Southern Quarter, located further to the south-east, which probably had a secondary residential function for palace officials.⁹

Secondly, in a topographic position similar to that of the two rooms just mentioned, located behind the back wall of the Throne Room, we could ascertain that the Northern Quarter stretched behind the north façade of the Audience Court L.2752, where the brick dais was on which the royal throne stood. It was accessible through a door opening immediately to the west of the dais, and included at least rooms L.9593, orientated south-north, east of this, the corridor L.2716+L.2617, and the two

⁸ These three small rooms, L.8495, L.8778, and L.8496, were located in a peripheral side part inside the Throne Room L.2866, much alike the Great Archive L.2769, and the vestibule L.2875, inside the Court of Audience: Matthiae, Ebla (1995) 89–94, fig. 11, 12, 14; id., CRAIBL (2006) 452–55, fig. 4: besides the difference in scale between Throne Room and Court of Audience, which quite likely had the same function but on different occasions, due to the amount of persons attending, and due to climate, the only basic difference is the fact that the royal dais in the Court of Audience, quite well preserved, was placed on the north side, and in the Throne Room it stood on the south side, which was removed in its central part by a pit made in order to carry away the foundation stones: Matthiae, Gli Archivi (2008) 51–56, 58–60.

⁹ About the excavation of the Southern Quarter see Matthiae CRAIBL (1983) 642–54, fig. 8–13; id., Les dernières découvertes d'Ebla en 1983–1986, CRAIBL (1987), 145–46, fig. 6–7. The entrance to the Southern Quarter, limited to the north by a massive terracing wall, M.3117, which probably prevented all connection with the Central Complex, as it happened between the Southern Quarter and the Administrative Quarter to the north-west, was probably located in the south side, where the Early Bronze IVA level has been cut by the superimposition of the wall of the inner fortification of Middle Bronze I, M.3606, singled out in 1984, and largely exposed in 2002–2005: Matthiae, CRAIBL (1987) 146–147, and id., CRAIBL (2004) 317–18, fig. 18.

large rooms L.9330 and L.9583. This new quarter of the palace complex was limited to the east by a massive south-north terracing wall, M.9333, which separated the quarter from the so-called North-West Wing, which included rooms L.2586 and L.2601, situated at a much higher level, on the slope of the Acropolis, and which had no communication with the Northern Quarter.¹⁰

It is quite likely that the Audience Court L.2752 and the Throne Room L.2866 had at least similar, if not identical functions and were used for reception, the first one when the weather was good and the persons they received more numerous, and the second one when the weather was not good, and the guests less numerous. Therefore, the two rooms L.2984 and L.2982, behind the Throne Room, and the Northern Quarter behind the Audience Court, probably also had a similar function for storage of goods, sometimes quite precious, received or distributed by the king during audiences.¹¹

One may try and find some correspondence between the sectors of the Royal Palace G discovered by the archaeological exploration, and the names of the Palace quarters mentioned in the texts of the Royal Archives. So, it seems quite certain that by the name of SA.ZA_x they called the complex of the building on Ebla Acropolis, including the Palace (é-en), as well as cult buildings close to the Palace, because several

¹⁰ It is quite important to point out that the North-West Wing, excavated in 1974, and including rooms L.2586, and L.2601, entered only from the north, through the bent axis staircase L.2610, which came down from a north sector of the upper quarters of the Royal Palace G, was a peripheral wing of the Central Complex of the palace, located on top of the Acropolis, and which has been largely lost. On the contrary, the Northern Quarter, largely reconstructed during the 2007 campaign, while during the 1975 campaign only the sections L.2716, and L.2617 of the corridor were singled out, probably entered only through the Court of Audience L.2715+L.2752, was all at the same level as the Court of Audience: the difference in level between the North-West Wing of the Central Complex, and the Northern Quarter of the Court of Audience, was of about 3.80/4.20 m, and certainly there was no other passage between these two sectors of the palace area.

¹¹ Both sectors of the Royal Palace G – the Northern Quarter north of the Court of Audience, and the two rooms south of the Throne Room – were certainly store-rooms, yet undoubtedly, when one takes into account the goods stored in them, there are clear differences, which can be examined in detail: in the Northern Quarter, an important amount of jars and clay sealings for vases and caskets was stored, and the standard presented in the following pages, while in the rooms south of the Throne Room there was a considerable amount of raw lapis lazuli, as well as several composite artefacts of semi-precious stones, wood, and gold: Matthiae, *Gli Archivi* (2008) 53, 60.

temples are mentioned, which were located in the SA.ZA_x.¹² It is quite likely that by the simple term for palace (é), they designated the group of edifices, only in part small and peripheral, brought to light by the excavations, which had residential, administrative, productive, and storage functions, which were located on the top and the slopes of the Acropolis.

It is difficult to identify some building or part of buildings, which seems to have been part of the Palace. In particular, it is quite likely that they designated by the term é-siki “Wool-house”, which certainly in the age of the Royal Archives, was the name of what can be defined the Palace Treasury,¹³ the whole Administrative Quarter, or, more likely, the complex of the Throne Room with the two rooms behind it, or even only these two last rooms, where, in fact, a large amount of raw lapis lazuli was also found together with several parts of composite statues of human figures and mythical beings.¹⁴

¹² About the meaning of this term, very frequent in the Archives texts, we believe the interpretations are no more acceptable as an administrative centre near Ebla, but separate from it (A. Archi, *Studi Eblaiti* 1 [1978] 112), as a site comparable with Puzriš-Dagan of the Ur III Dynasty (E. Sollberger, *ARET* 8 [1986] p. 68–69), as a kind of governorship, seat of the head of the administration (G. Pettinato, *MEE* 2, p. 31) and certainly also as a treasure house (M. Civil, *Or.* 52 [1983] 236, 240). According to some, the relation between SA.ZA_x and the various é mentioned in the texts is not yet clear (M. Bonechi, *RGTC* 12/1 [1983] 281–82), and yet it should be a complex of buildings inside Ebla (L. Milano, *ARET* 9 [1990] p. 402), certainly located on the Acropolis of Tell Mardikh (A. Archi, *ARET* 1 [1985] p. 301, and *ARET* 7 [1988] p. 232), including several cult places (Bonechi, *RGTC* 12/1, 280–81), the Palace, and apparently also the royal residential quarters (M. G. Biga, *PdP* 46 [1991] 285, n. 1; Matthiae, Ebla [1995] 280–82); Matthiae, *Gli Archivi* (2008) 42, 61, 130–131, 133–136.

¹³ The term é-siki “wool house”, was interpreted at the beginning by D. O. Edzard, *ARET* 2 (1981) p. 123, on the basis of too little textual evidence, as a textile workshop, but more recently A. Archi, *ARET* 7 (1987) p. 50–52, correctly identified the meaning as “treasury, treasure house”, which the term certainly took on as a historical development of the original literal meaning.

¹⁴ Matthiae, *CRAIBL* (2004) 310–17, fig. 7–17. In general terms a similar identification for é-siki was also proposed by A. Archi, *The Head of Kura – The Head of Adabal*, *JNES* 52 (2005) 96. About the lapis lazuli discovered in the Royal Palace G see F. Pinnock, *The Lapis Lazuli in the Royal Palace of Ebla. Contribution to the Discussion about Third Millennium BC Long Distance Trade in Syro-Palestinian Area*, in: *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Palestine II* (1987) 65–71; ead., *Observations on the Trade of Lapis Lazuli in the Third Millennium BC*, in: H. Hauptmann/H. Waetzoldt (eds.), *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft von Ebla* (1988), 107–10; ead., *The Raw Lapis Lazuli in the Royal Palace G of Ebla: New Evidence from the Annexes of the Throne Room*, in: M. E. Alberti [et al.] (eds.), *Proceedings of the International Colloquium: Weights in Context. Bronze Age Weighing Systems of Eastern Mediterranean* (2006) 347–57.

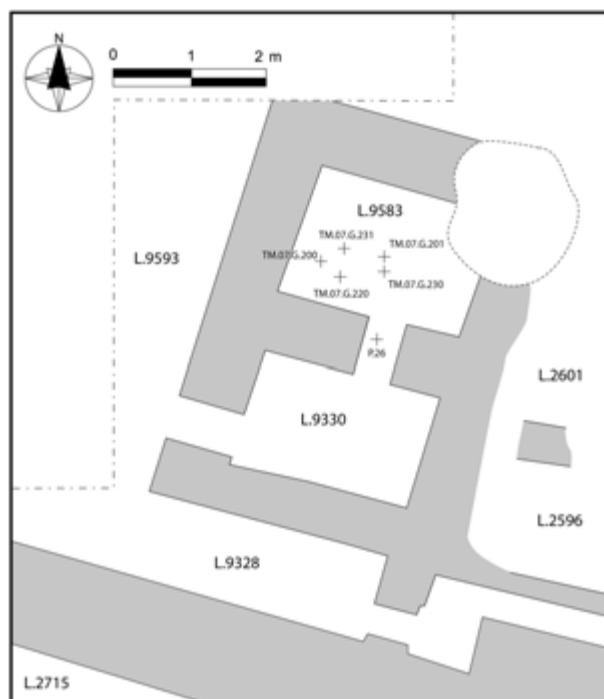


Fig. 2: Ebla, Royal Palace G: schematic plan of the Northern Quarter, EB IVA, 2350–2300 B.C.

Moreover, Kura's Temple located in the SA.ZA_x, where the long ceremonies of the "Ritual of Kingship" ended with the king and queen dedicating 16 spears to the great god, is quite certainly the cult building below Ishtar's Temple of the Acropolis (Temple D).¹⁵ On the other hand, it is

¹⁵ The mention of Kura's Temple in the SA.ZA_x is in P. Fronzaroli, *ARET XI* (1993) 68–69, 87–88; see also L. Milano, *Luoghi di culto in Ebla: economia e sistema delle offerte*, *ScAnt* 3–4 (1989–1990) 156–57 and F. Pomponio/P. Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla* (1997), 246. About the remains of a cult building below the Old Syrian Ishtar's Temple (Temple D), on the citadel of Middle Bronze I–II see Matthiae, *Ebla* (1995) 126–28, pl. 73. In the excavation season of 2008, a series of new soundings opened below and around Temple D has proven the existence of a smaller Temple D2 of Early Bronze IVB and of the bigger and monumental Temple D3, called Red Temple for the strongly reddish colour of the mud bricks of its masonry in part well preserved under the large Temple D of Middle Bronze I–II: Temple D3 or Red Temple of Early Bronze IVA is contemporary to the last phase of Royal Palace G; Matthiae, *CRAIBL* (2009) in press. Important evaluations about a possible continuity in the cult of god Kura/Kur(r)a may

quite likely that the Temple of the Rock, singled out in 2004, and almost completely brought to light by 2007 in a very peripheral region of the Lower Town south-east, was Kura's Temple located near Kura's Gate,¹⁶ which was hinted at, it seems, at the beginning of the "Ritual of Kingship" and which the queen entered after waiting in the fields outside the town walls in order to start the ceremonies for the renewal of kingship.¹⁷

In the north room L.9583 of the Northern Quarter (Fig. 2), behind the Audience Court, two composite miniature statues of exquisite workmanship were found during the 2007 excavation campaign, which are masterpieces of court art of the high Early Syrian period.¹⁸ The larger one (Fig. 3) represents a standing female figure of wood, steatite, jasper, and silver, and the smaller one (Fig. 4) is a sitting female in wood, limestone, gold, and jasper. According to our interpretation they belong to the same ceremonial court object with three other bronze pieces: a small incense burner with a bowl and the representation of two small flames (Fig. 5; 15); the much damaged fragments of the revetment of a timber pole (Fig. 6–7), which probably had a swelling near the top, and a quite enigmatic large ring with a partition inside, the length of its diameter, and two triangles outside (Fig. 8).¹⁹ All these pieces were found at a short distance from one another on the floor of L.9583.

now be found in K. Lawson Younger, Jr., *The Deity Kur(r)a in the First Millennium Sources*, JANER 9 (2009) 1–23.

¹⁶ Matthiae, CRAIBL (2006) 458–92, fig. 9–36; id., *Nouvelles fouilles à Ebla en 2006: Le Temple du Rocher et ses successeurs protosyriens et paléosyriens*, CRAIBL (2007) 481–525; id., CRAIBL (2009) in press.

¹⁷ Fronzaroli, ARET XI (1993) 3–4, 54, 85.

¹⁸ As the two statues were found on the floor of the room at a short distance from each other in quite a good state of preservation, it is possible to reconstruct the action which brought them in the finding position. Neither of them was the object of pillage, and they quite certainly fell down coming off the ceremonial object to which they belonged, and were perhaps left behind for the immediate collapse of at least some of the walls, which covered and concealed them. At the time of the destruction the object was not lying on the ground, as in this instance all its individual parts would have been found in place, but it was probably leaning against the south wall of the room: when it fell down, the upper part, where the two figures were, probably suffered the strongest damage, but the two statues were protected by the collapse of the structures, which did not crush them.

¹⁹ Only the bronze ring TM.06.G.906 (thickness 1,3 cm.; diameter 8,0 cm.) and the gold revetment TM.06.G.980 of the sitting figure's stool were found slightly shifted to the east, in room L.9583, with respect to the two figures found in 2007, and they were found in 2006, while the remains of the standard pole were found against the south wall, in part lying in the empty space of the door between L.9583 and L.9330. The timber pole, strongly damaged at the moment of finding, presented not few very thin fragments of the bronze revetment and it was possible to notice at least that its preserved length was of approximately 53 cm.



Fig. 3: Ebla, Royal Palace G: the silver and steatite standing figure TM.07.G.231 in situ in room L.9583, EB IVA, ca. 2300 B.C.

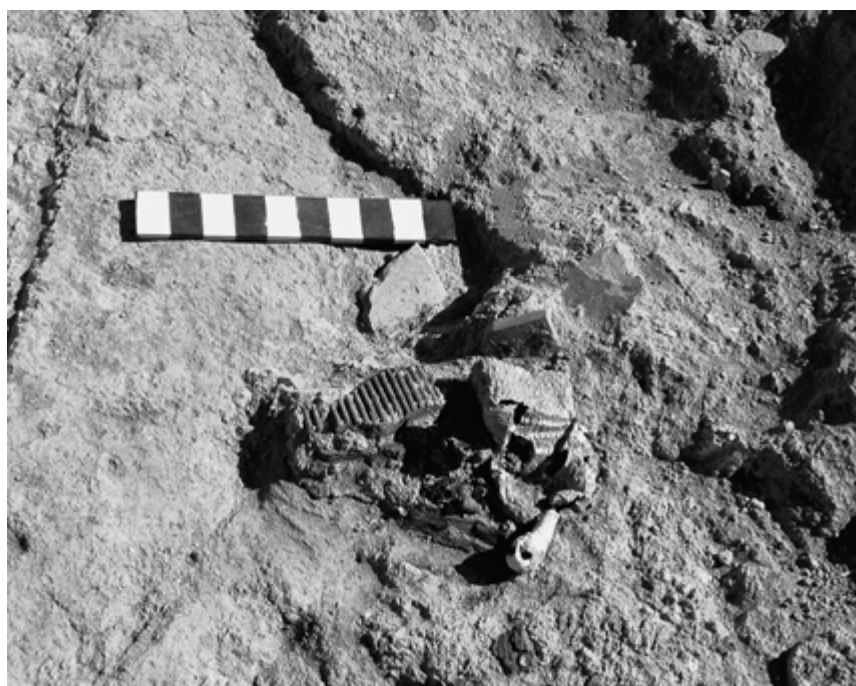


Fig. 4: Ebla, Royal Palace G: the gold and limestone sitting figure TM.07.G.230 in situ in room L.9583, EB IVA, ca. 2300 B.C.



Fig. 5: Damascus, National Museum: the bronze incense burner TM.07.G.220, from room L.9583, EB IVA, ca. 2300 B.C.

The standing female figure (Fig. 9–10, 16), TM.07.G.231, which had a core of carved wood, completely covered with silver foil, and with a hollow steatite dress, was composed of several separate pieces, skilfully assembled according to the basic principle that the naked parts of the body were made of a thick silver foil, the hair-dress and dress of steatite; a very thin linear decoration probably of jasper was inlaid in the dress, at the top of a long fringe at the base of the costume; parts of the two arms and, peculiarly, the feet are missing,²⁰ perhaps because the silver foil was thin-

²⁰ The total loss of the figure's feet is the most enigmatic aspect of the find, as it seems difficult to understand why, if the feet were made of silver like all the other naked parts of the body, there is no trace of them; on the contrary, it is not difficult to understand why the statue, falling down, was broken at the height of the ankles, as certainly this is the weakest point of the figure. A hypothesis, not totally convincing, may be that the figure wore sandals made of a perishable material, that completely disappeared, or rather that the feet were made of a silver foil much thinner than that used for the face, bust, and arms.



Fig. 6: Ebla, Royal Palace G: the timber pole with bronze revetment in situ in room L.9583, EB IVA, ca. 2300 B.C.

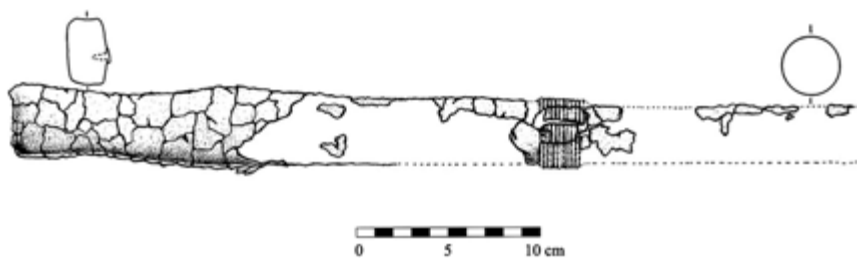


Fig. 7: Ebla, Royal Palace G: reconstruction of the timber pole with bronze revetment (drawing by Halil Hamid), EB IVA, ca. 2300 B.C.



Fig. 8: Idlib, Archaeological Museum: the bronze ring TM.06.906 found in room L.9583, EB IVA, ca. 2300 B.C.

ner and was not preserved. The figurine was 14 cm high, and one may infer that the total height including feet was of 15.5 cm.

The sitting female figure (Fig. 11–13, 19), TM.07.G.230, was definitely smaller, but its structure was more complex, with an exceptional assemblage of miniature pieces. Also in this specimen the core of the statue was of wood, but the naked parts of the figure – head, legs, and arms – were of white limestone, while the classical cloak of wool flocks, the so-called *kau-nakés*, was of gold foil, and the hair-dress was of steatite; the minuscule cup she held in her right hand, was made of jasper. The stool (Fig. 14), of a complex structure, was of white limestone, decorated with jasper inlays, and the protruding parts were covered with gold foil. The seated figure was fixed on a small dais of a grey-bluish stone, rectangular in shape, as large as the stool, but much longer, and the woman's feet were placed on it.

The incense burner (Fig. 5, 15), TM.07.G.220, is completely made of bronze and is shaped as a small column, slightly tapering towards the



Figs. 9 and 10: Damascus, National Museum: the silver and steatite standing female figure TM.07.G.231, front and side views, EB IVA, ca. 2300 B.C.

top, ending in a kind of small bowl, with two flames sprouting from it.²¹ At its base the beginning of a central stud is still preserved, which was probably inserted in a base, quite likely also made of bronze, but which was almost totally lost due to corrosion of the metal.²²

²¹ Height 7.3 cm; width and thickness 3.1 cm.

²² In fact, near the south wall of room L.9583 several fragments of bronze sheets were found, possibly belonging to a broken bronze base, probably originally a couple of millimetres thick, strongly corroded.



Fig. 11: Damascus, National Museum: the gold and limestone sitting female figure TM.07.G.230, front view, EB IVA, ca. 2300 B.C.

The standing figure, TM.07.G.231, represents a woman wearing a quite complicated mantle (Fig. 16),²³ decorated at the bottom and on the sides with long fringes, which covered the left shoulder while leaving the right shoulder and also the right breast bare. She held her right arm, with stretched hand, to the waist, and the left arm was bent to the breast with the closed fist brought to the cheek.²⁴ The figure's head had a wonderful steatite hair-dress (Fig. 17), made with extreme care, with not too long

²³ This statue TM.07.G.231 was found intact on the floor, with the back upwards: no part of the composite figure had been detached falling on the floor; only very limited crushing took place in very limited sectors of the silver foil; in particular the left arm, bent with the fist leaning to a cheek was not crushed, thus the figure's attitude as seen today is certainly the original one.

²⁴ TM.07.G.231/a, head and bust of silver foil: height 7,3 cm., width 4,9 cm., thickness 3,2 cm., weight 14.1 gr.; 231/b, steatite hair-dress: height 3,1 cm., width 2,4 cm., thickness 1,4 cm.; 231/c, steatite dress: height 11,6 cm., width 4,7 cm., thickness 3,3 cm.; 231/d, silver foil leg: height 2,9 cm., width 1,1 cm., thickness 1,2 cm., weight 2 gr.; 231/e, silver foil leg 3,0 cm. (4,1 with the wooden peg), width 1,0 cm., thickness 1,2 cm., weight 2.2 gr.; 231/f, wooden head: height 2,5 cm., width 1,3 cm., thickness 1,8 cm.



Figs. 12 and 13: Damascus, National Museum: the gold and limestone sitting female figure TM.07.G.230, three quarter and side views, EB IVA, ca. 2300 B.C.



Fig. 14: Damascus, National Museum: the limestone stool belonging to the sitting female figure TM.07.G.230, EB IVA, ca. 2300 B.C.

hair, reaching to the base of the neck: this hair-dress, similar to other ones, usually made of steatite, but sometimes also of lapis lazuli, discovered in the past years in several rooms of the Royal Palace G,²⁵ had on the sides wavy plaits, ending in locks, whose refined workmanship continued on to the lower side. A central separate band and two side bands, nearly vertical, all very thin and also made of steatite, with fringes of curled hair, were attached to the forehead and temples, in order to render the hair-dress on the face. A silver band separated these frontal locks from the rest of the hair-dress, certainly rendering a cloth

²⁵ Matthiae, CRAIBL (1978) 227, fig. 19; id., *I tesori di Ebla* (Roma 1984) pl. 46; id., *Ebla* (1995) 95–96; P. Matthiae et al. (eds), *Ebla. Alle origini della civiltà urbane* (Milano 1995) 300, 315, n. 65, 89, 90; Matthiae, CRAIBL (2004) 314, fig. 13, 15–16. Similar miniature hair-dresses of steatite, though with different attires, are also attested in Lower Mesopotamia during the Neo-Sumerian and Old Babylonian periods at Girsu, Ur, and Uruk: A. Spycket, *La statuaire du Proche-Orient ancien* (Leiden 1981) 251, pl. 174. Another piece, well known for the presence of a votive inscription for Šulgi of Ur, is the female hair-dress BM.91075 (= 12218) of the British Museum, of unknown provenance, about which see E. A. Braun-Holzinger, *Mesopotamische Weihgaben der Frühdynastischen bis Altbabylonischen Zeit* (Heidelberg 1991) 373–74, pl. 24.

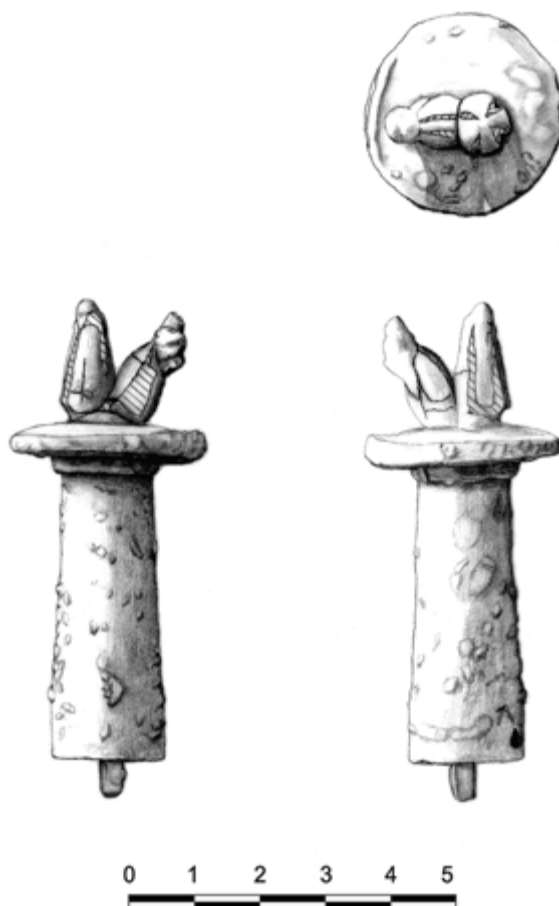


Fig. 15: Damascus, National Museum: the bronze incense burner TM.07.G.220 (drawing by Halil Hamid), EB IVA, ca. 2300 B.C.

ribbon which fastened the hair from behind the ears to the top of the head.²⁶

²⁶ The silver band separating the locks falling over the fore-head and on the sides of the face, behind the temples, from the mass of hair falling in thick plaits on the back of the head should be considered a cloth band, yet it is difficult to understand why it is made of silver, a material used in this image only for the naked skin. M. G. Biga, whom I deeply thank, points out to me that mentions of thin bands “in order to bind the head” are quite frequent in the Archives texts. They were clearly used in order to bind or keep the hair in order on the head (*níg-lá-sag*), and were frequently given to men and women of the court, and to the king too; they were almost always of wool, but

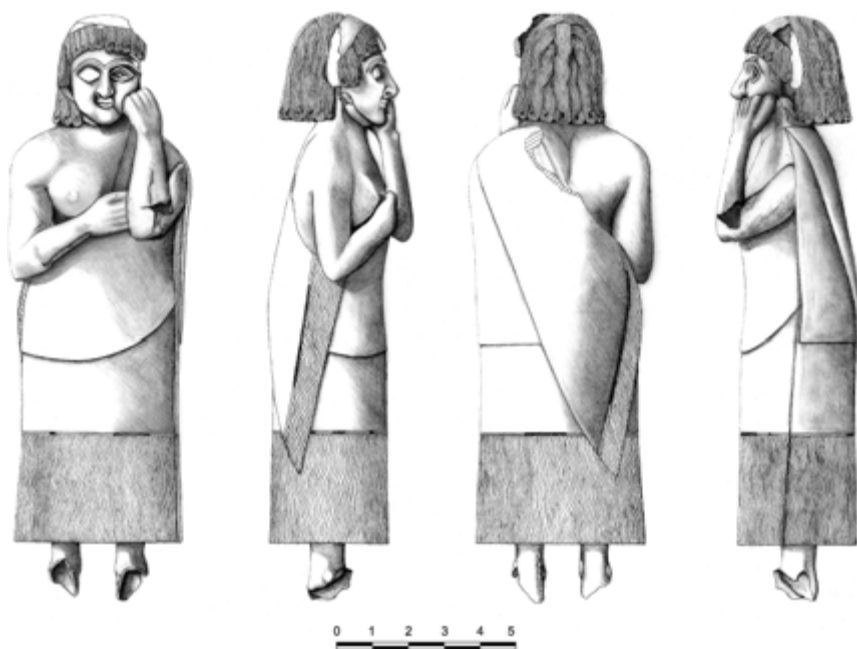


Fig. 16: Damascus, National Museum: the silver and steatite standing female figure TM.07.G.231, front, side and rear views (drawings by Halil Hamid), EB IVA, ca. 2300 B.C.

The bare parts of the body (Fig. 18) – face, arms, part of the breast and the lower part of the legs, and quite likely also the lost feet – were modelled with exceptional workmanship in the silver foil. In particular, the quite large face with full cheeks, had the eyes marked by a steatite inlay, but corneas and irises are missing, as well as the inlay for the eye-brows, which was placed in one double-arched hollow.²⁷ The structure of the bust was quite naturalistic, with the bare right breast on which the accurately modelled nipple is clearly visible. In the same way, arms and hands were worked with great care, with clearly distinct fingers, with naturalistic proportions, as it was certainly the case with the lost feet, as can be judged from the preserved lower part of the calves.

sometimes also of gold and silver: this might lead to think of the fragments of six gold intertwined bands (TM.04.G.170a–f), found in the inner room L.8496 of the Throne Room L.2866: Matthiae, CRAIBL (2006) 455–457, fig.8.

²⁷ Only the inlay for the left eye, set in the silver plait, was preserved; the right eye is completely lost, and the opening in the silver foil, where its was fixed, is clearly visible.

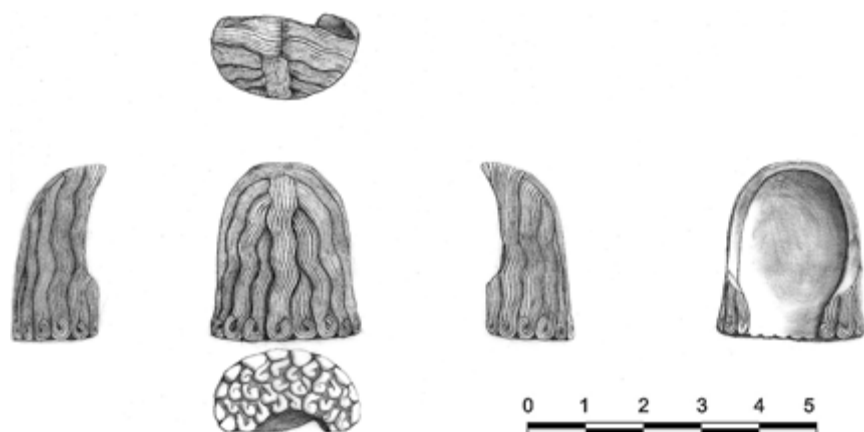


Fig. 17: Damascus, National Museum: the steatite hair-dress of the standing female figure TM.07.G.231, front, side, rear views (drawing by Halil Hamid), EB IVA, ca. 2300 B.C.



Fig. 18: Damascus, National Museum: the silver bust of the standing female figure TM.07.G.231, rear, front and side views (drawing by Halil Hamid), EB IVA, ca. 2300 B.C.

The inner core of the figure consisted of a wooden support on which they assembled with extreme skilfulness the cloak and the metal leaves covering the bust, head and legs. We doubt that this wooden core of the figure was realistically carved,²⁸ but the head, quite well preserved, was carved with great care. The details of the face, as well as the locks of the

²⁸ It is quite likely that the figure's bust was not carved, but only summarily outlined, in order to serve as support for the whole figure; however, certainly, the face and hair were minutely and realistically incised, and the legs, in much a similar way, were carved as to be the support for the silver foil, and to make the whole figure stable.

hair-dress, which do not correspond to those of the steatite hair-dress, are made with exceptional capacity, and can be compared with the heads of the figures of the carved furniture found in 1974 in the North-West Wing of the Royal Palace G.²⁹ As the wooden head was definitely smaller than the silver leaf revetment, structure and modelling of the inlay of the wooden piece and of the silver foil were in fact wholly independent, and the foil, also as a consequence of its relative thickness, did not adhere perfectly to the wooden core.

The image represented by the sitting statue TM.07.G.230 (Fig. 11–13, 19) was a female wrapped in a heavy cloak of woollen fleece made of gold,³⁰ who held in her right hand, probably slightly brought forward and probably not leaning on the thigh, a very small cup or goblet of jasper, while the left arm, completely preserved, was leaning on the left leg, and the stretched hand was probably placed on the knee.³¹ The cloak of gold leaf suffered some crushing, but its original shape could be recovered, and it seems almost complete except for some damage to the openings from where the limestone arms protruded: in particular, in the place where the arms were inserted, and even more so compared to the opening for the left arm over the knee, the openings in the foil seem too large for the very thin arms.

²⁹ Matthiae, I tesori (1984) pl. 41–43; id., Ebla (1995) 105–111, pl. 37–43.

³⁰ The statuette TM.07.G.230 was found on the floor with the front part turned up, and the grey stone base, the limestone stool, and the gold cloak still in the original position; the head had fallen down from its placement, and the arms, legs, and bowl were scattered around; at a short distance there was the steatite hair-dress. These data of the finding clearly show that the figure probably fell from not a great height, so, only the parts weakly fixed fell off, like the head, arms and legs, and hair-dress; the base, stool and cloak, on the other hand, were strongly kept together by a thick wooden stud, which later on disappeared; the gold foil, particularly in the upper part of the figure suffered some crushing, probably as a consequence of the collapses of the walls. The gold covering of the stool, which apparently was well adapted to the limestone core, was found at some distance east of the statuette, as it probably fell down at the time of the collapse of the original piece.

³¹ TM.07.G.230/a, limestone head: height 2,1 cm., width 0,9 cm., thickness 1,1 cm.; 230/b, steatite hair-dress: height 1,2 cm., width 1,9 cm., thickness 1,6 cm.; 230/c, gold cloak: height 4,9 cm., width 3,8 cm., thickness 4,1 cm., weight 4.2 gr.; 230/d, limestone stool: height 1,9 cm., width 2,1 cm., thickness 1,8 cm.; 230/e, limestone right arm: length 1,7 cm., width 0,5 cm., thickness 0,4 cm.; 230/f, limestone left arm: length 1,9 cm., width 0,4 cm., thickness 0,3 cm.; 230/g, jasper bowl: height 0,5 cm., diameter 0,3 cm.; 230/h, limestone right foot: height 0,9 cm., width 0,5 cm., length 1,0 cm.; 230/i, limestone left foot: height 0,9 cm., width 0,6 cm., length 1,4 cm.; grey stone dais: length 3,6 cm., width 2,2 cm., height 0,4 cm.

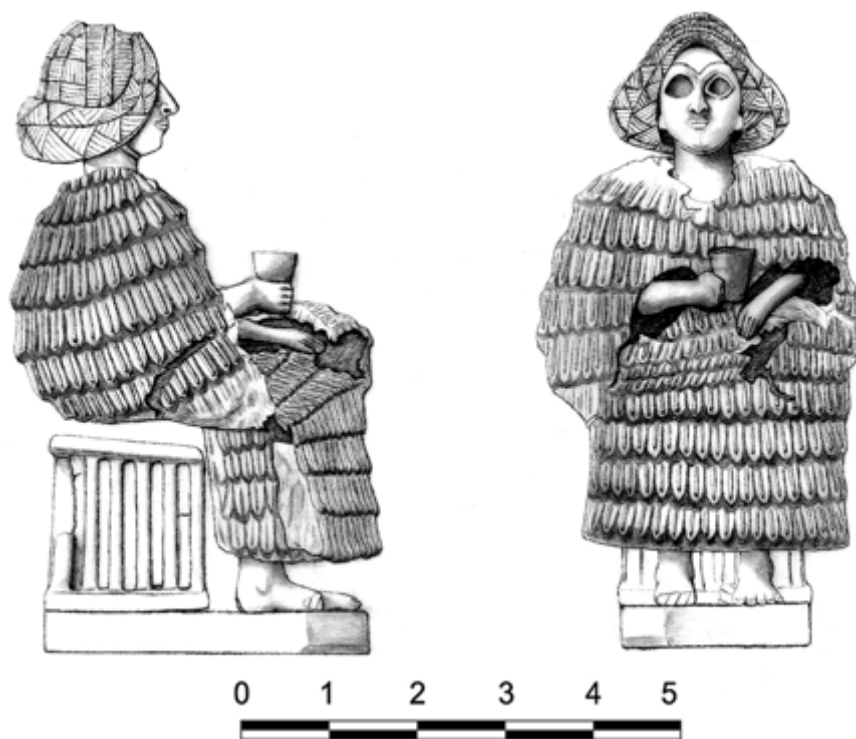


Fig. 19: Damascus, National Museum: the gold and limestone sitting female figure TM.07.G.230, side and front views (drawing by Halil Hamid), EB IVA, ca. 2300 B.C.

All the naked parts of the body of this sitting statue were made of quite a soft limestone, and were fortunately not damaged by the fire that destroyed the Royal Palace G (Fig. 20).³² They were found separate from the body. Their position had to be reconstructed therefore on the basis of the naturalistic rendering of the fingers, arms and legs, which made the left distinct from the right, notwithstanding the very small size. Also the steatite hair-dress (Fig. 21) had tumbled at some distance from the body. The rectangular base, on the other hand, the stool with small columns, and the fleeced cloak were found in their original placement, because evidently when they

³² The excellent state of preservation of all the bare parts of the limestone body leads to believe that the collapses, even partial, of the mudbrick of the side structures protected the figurine from the action of fire, because otherwise the limestone would have been calcined and pulverized, as it happened with the miniature figure of a priestess, TM.83.G.400, discovered in room L.3600 in the Southern Quarter: Matthiae, *I tesori* (1984) pl. 38; Matthiae et al. (eds), *Ebla* (1995) 317, n. 95.

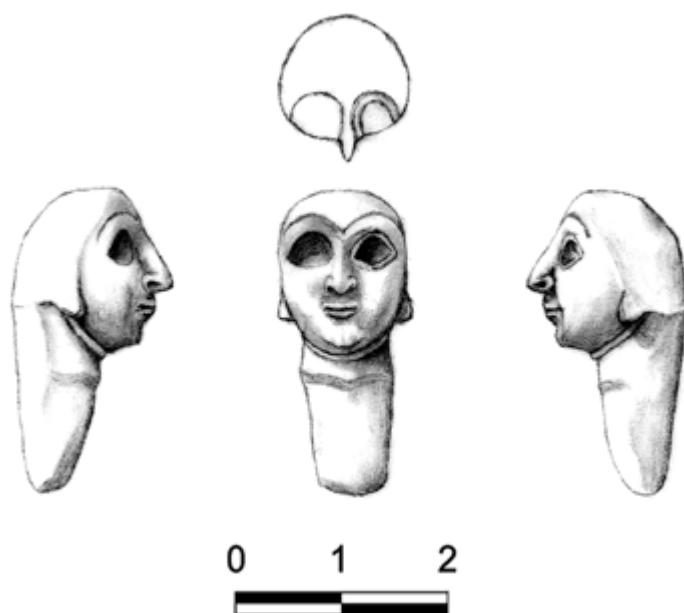


Fig. 20: Damascus, National Museum: the limestone head of the sitting female figure TM.07.G.230, side and front views (drawings by Halil Hamid), EB IVA, ca. 2300 B.C.

fell down, the pegs which fixed the individual pieces – almost certainly made of wood – resisted the fall and kept the three pieces together.

The stability of the statue was ensured by an original wooden core placed inside the golden fleeced cloak. On top there was a hole to attach the head, and the assemblage of all the parts of the figure was made solid and compact by a wooden peg,³³ which was probably fixed, at the bottom, into the copper or bronze base of the group, entering the regular hole which pierced the limestone stool in its whole height reaching a hollow in the base of the wooden core. The small steatite hair-dress perfectly fitted the top of the limestone head, and did not show any trace of adhesive inside, yet some kind of glue had to be used to fix head and hair-dress.

³³ The structural idea for this sitting figure TM.07.G.230 is undoubtedly the same as that of the standing figure TM.07.G.231: the assemblage of the individual parts of the figures, made of different materials, was made possible by means of a wooden core, probably not completely worked, which, as concerns the standing figure, was the skeleton of the whole piece, and, for the sitting figure, was only the support holding the studs keeping the limestone head, arms and legs in place.

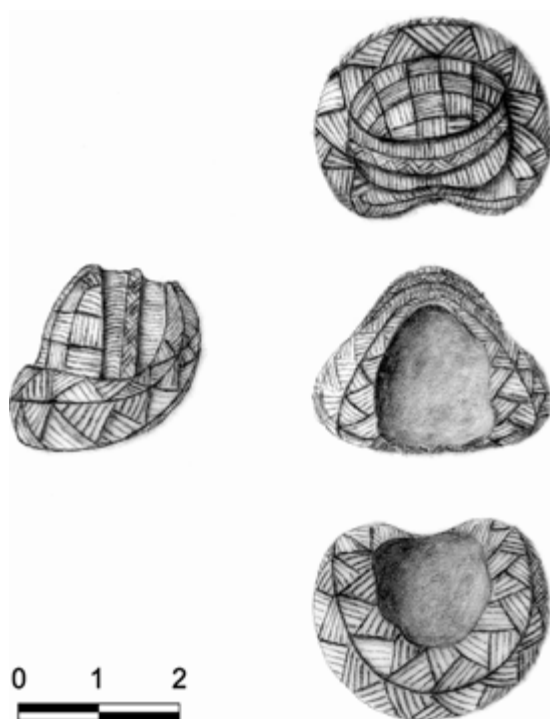


Fig. 21: Damascus, National Museum: the steatite hair-dress of the sitting female figure TM.07.G.230, side, front and rear views (drawing by Halil Hamid), EB IVA, ca. 2300 B.C.

The limestone stool was of extraordinary workmanship (Fig. 22). In fact, seven thin columns were carved in their full height on the back side, and six on each side; in the thin hollows between the columns, of the same height, long and very thin cylindrical inlays of jasper were placed, several of which were still in place. Moreover, all the visible limestone parts of the stool were covered with a thin gold foil, which covered the top and bottom edges, as well as the columns (Fig. 23);³⁴ the foil, however, suffered some damage, and it is now very difficult to put it back in place on the limestone base, but its original placement on the stool is certain. Thus the stool appeared as if made of pierced gold, with very thin vertical inlays of jasper.³⁵

³⁴ TM.06.G.880: height 1,8 cm.; thickness 0,1 cm.

³⁵ The stool of the composite statuette from the Royal Palace G is a variant of a stool well documented in the votive statues of ladies from Mari, more or less of the same period,

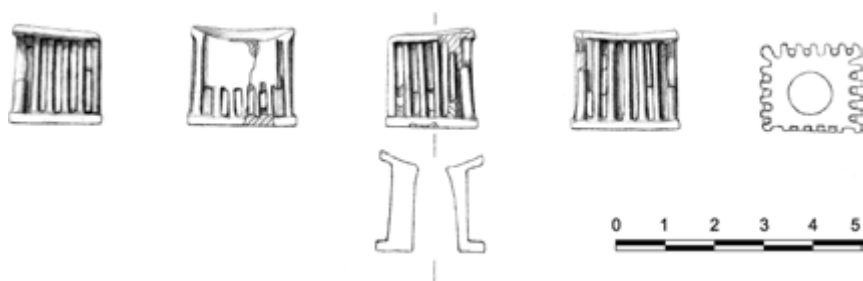


Fig. 22: Damascus, National Museum: the limestone and jasper stool belonging to the sitting female figure TM.07.G.230, front, side and rear views (drawings by Halil Hamid), EB IVA, ca. 2300 B.C.

In spite of the difference in scale between the two human figures, which might have a precise reason, the discovery of the standing statue, the incense-burner, and of the seated statue, all in close proximity to each other in the same room L.9583 at a short distance of one from the other, notwithstanding makes it quite likely that the three pieces belonged to one group of miniature statues with a special function (Fig. 24).³⁶ In fact, it seems quite likely that the standing female figure was represented in pious meditation in front not of a real seated lady, but rather of the statue of a sitting lady, in front of which there was a bronze incense burner. The fact that the statue is represented on a small dais seems proof of the fact that it was a statue, and its size, smaller than that of the other figure, should reflect the fact that the statue was approximately half the life size.³⁷

dedicated in the Early Dynastic Period III: A. Parrot, *Mission Archéologique de Mari I: Le Temple d'Ishtar* (Paris 1956) 85–86, 100, pl. XXXVII (M.647–826 = AO.18213), XLI (M.1025 = AO.19066 e M.265 = Aleppo Museum). A still more elaborate variant is probably the priestess's stool published by A. Parrot, *Mission Archéologique de Mari III: Les Temples d'Ishtar et de Ninni-zaza* (Paris 1967) 96–98, pl. XLVIII–L (M.2308+2368+2383). One may also observe that in the votive statues from Ishtar's Temple, which bear the closest similarities to the Ebla piece, the vertical elements in the corners are always bulls' hoofs, completely missing in the products of the Ebla workshop.

³⁶ The three elements – the two statues and the incense burner – were probably fixed on a small, probably not very thick, bronze base, some fragments of which have been found in a very bad state of preservation, mentioned *supra* at fn. 22.

³⁷ In the economic texts of the Royal Archives of Ebla there are frequent mentions of deliveries of relatively small amounts of precious materials, often gold and silver, for the production of one statue, or rather, in the larger majority of cases, of statues, usually of deities: cfr. A. Archi, *NABU* (1988) 77, and most of all id., *Données épigraphiques éblaïtes et production artistique*, RA 84 (1990) 101–105. Concerning the Mesopotamian world, see J. Renger, *Kultbild*, A. Philologisch, RIA 6 (Berlin 1980–83) 307–14.



Fig. 23: Idlib, Archaeological Museum: the gold revetment TM.06.G.880 belonging to the stool of the sitting female figure TM.07.G.230, EB IVA, ca. 2300 B.C.

The obvious difference in the materials for the two figures, as well as the difference in size, and the presence of the small dais, points to an explicit and deliberate indication of the fact that the two figures were not homogeneous: the standing figure represented a real woman, while the sitting figure represented a precious statue.³⁸ In fact, the use of gold for the cloak and stool of this figure reproduces, on the one hand, possibly in a realistic way, the extreme preciousness of a votive or cult image of a very peculiar female character, and, on the other hand, stresses the patent dif-

³⁸ The materials used for the standing figure are probably those usually employed for the representation in miniature art in the round of court officials of the mature Early Syrian Ebla in Early Bronze IVA; in fact, it is certainly not by chance that the only other quite well preserved statue of a princess or veiled priestess found in the Southern Quarter (cfr. *supra* fn. 32) wears a steatite cloak with decorations of horizontal bands of jasper, precisely as in the standing figure from the Northern Quarter. On the other hand the material chosen for the naked parts of the new statue's body is definitely more precious and therefore it needed a greater technical skill than the statuette discovered in 1983 – silver for the new standing statue from the official Northern Quarter and limestone for the sitting statuette from the private Southern Quarter; this might be a consequence of the fact that the standing figure represented a queen, while the sitting figure of 1983 represented a priestess, as it is probably proven by the iconographically comparable statue from Mari (where, however, there is a polos below the veil): Parrot, *Temples d'Ishtar*, pl. XLVIII-XLIX.

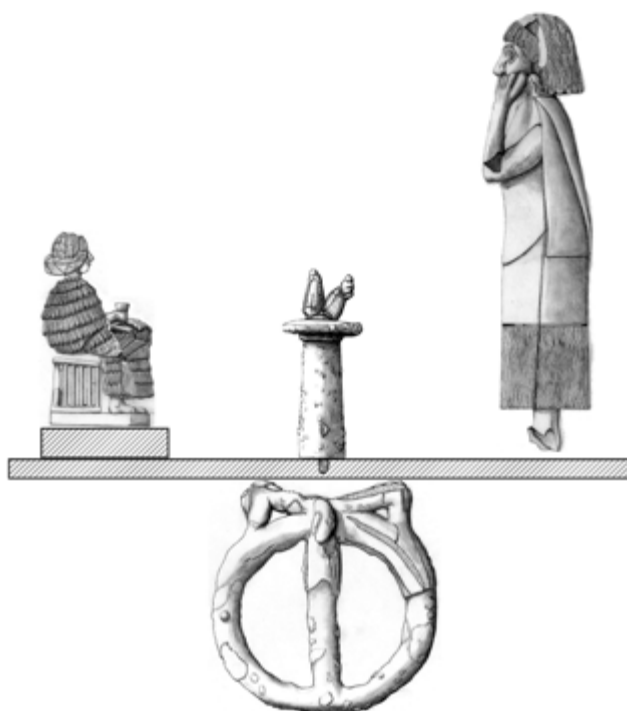


Fig. 24: Reconstruction of the statuettes group belonging to a queen standard with the standing and sitting female figures and the incense burner, EB IVA, ca. 2300 B.C.

ference, in nature itself, from the standing figure, where all the materials employed are different, except for the hairdo, which in both cases is made of steatite.³⁹

³⁹ It is quite likely that in miniature statues of the mature Early Syrian Ebla of the Archives period in the Royal Palace G, the gold revetment for naked parts of bodies were largely reserved, though not exclusively, to divine and mythical beings; in fact, on the one hand, the crouching man-headed bull TM.76.G.850 from the trapezoidal archive L.2764, discovered in 1976, has the body, face and horns covered with gold foil. On the other hand, the well preserved arms TM.03.G.785 and TM.03.G.767 in gold foil, found in 2003 in the store L.2982 behind the Throne Room, confirm this hypothesis, since the latter ones probably belonged to a bull-man's figure, whose hair-dress was also found intact, TM.03.G.835, bearing the side holes for fixing the bull's horns: Matthiae, *I tesori* (1984) pl. 39c; id., CRAIBL (2004) 314–17, fig. 12–13, 15–16. In other instances, in particular for the composite panels in high relief, though the reconstruction is not certain, it is possible that gold foil was also used for the revetment of naked parts of the body for the king's figures: Matthiae, *I tesori* (1984) pl. 36b.

The identity of the two female figures, represented on a different scale, is quite an important problem, which we believe we can solve when taking into account human and divine iconography, as can be reconstructed in the palace and temple milieus of the high Early Syrian Ebla in the age of the Royal Archives.⁴⁰

The first observation concerns the complete absence, in both figures, of explicit elements hinting at a divine nature. Although, generally speaking, a unitary canonical characterization of deities in the art of the Royal Palace G is not yet clear, at least in light of the not completely preserved impressions of high Early Syrian cylinder seals, it seems certain that the great goddess, lady of the animals of the palace glyptic of Early Bronze IVA, probably is to be identified with Ishkhara. She is depicted with a tiara, or rather a head-dress with two horns free standing on the forehead, and a central not clear element on the top of her head.⁴¹ The standing figure, on the other hand, does not wear any head-dress, while the sitting figure's hairdo is a very complicated structure with swollen ribbons.

The second observation concerns the taller standing figure, whose hair consists of accurately made locks, held firm by a very thin band, which separates the mass of hair from the nice fringe with locks falling on the forehead and temples. This kind of hair-dress, simple yet accurate, is similar, yet not identical to one of the steatite hair-dresses, slightly smaller than life-size, made of several assembled steatite plaques, belonging to a couple of certainly royal heads, placed inside the inner court of

⁴⁰ Besides some well known iconographies of mythical beings, like the bull-man evidently inspired by Early Dynastic III Mesopotamia, whom the palace workshops of the Ebla carvers accompanied with the original creation of the cow-woman, peculiarly mature Early Syrian, the only divine iconography apparently represented in the Ebla of the Archives is the mistress of wild animals of palace glyptic; about iconographies in the Royal Palace G glyptic see Matthiae, Ebla (1995) 101–05.

⁴¹ Id., Ebla (1995) p. 103, fig. 18a, 18c; this divine figure, undoubtedly an original creation of the palace workshops of the Royal Palace G of Ebla, usually wears a peculiar skirt with oblique flounces descending from the middle to the sides, and in Ushra-Samu's seal, recently brought to light, she is meaningfully associated with the goddess Ishkhara's scorpion; the latter's dominating role among the female deities of the Ebla of the Royal Archives was maintained by A. Archi, *Divinités sémitiques et divinités de substrat: le cas d'Išhara et d'Ištar à Ebla*, MARI 7 (1993) 71–78; id., *Substrate: Some Remarks on the Formation of the West Hurrian Pantheon*, in: H. Otten et al. (eds), *Hittite and Other Anatolian and Near Eastern Studies in Honour of S. Alp* (Ankara 1992) 6–14. About Ishkhara in the Ebla texts see now D. Prechel, *Die Göttin Išhara. Ein Beitrag zur altorientalischen Religionsgeschichte* (Münster 1996) 5–22 and Pomponio/Xella, *Les dieux d'Ebla* (Münster 1997) 202–217. The identification of Ishkhara's iconography is presented by P. Matthiae, *The Seal of the Ebla Dignitary Ushra-Samu and the Iconography of Ishkhara*, to be published in a *Festschrift*.

the Administrative Quarter, in front of the Throne Room L.2866.⁴² Quite similar is also the hair of the female accompanying a male personage wearing a turban, repeatedly represented in the contest scenes of palace glyptic from the Royal Palace G.⁴³ Female hair-dresses with compact locks and a central partition on top of the head are also attested in the wood and stone inlays from the Royal Palace G, certainly depicting ladies of the royal family.⁴⁴

The third observation regards the smaller sitting figure, whose steatite hairdo, for its accurate workmanship a real masterpiece of miniature sculpture, is certainly unique in the art of the Royal Palace G. This hair-dress, where it is not easy to distinguish hair plaits from thick cloth bands, has two swollen elements with crossing bands on top of the head,⁴⁵ while one third thick band frames the forehead; this last element, particularly meaningful, is characterised by the fact that it rises and becomes thinner in the middle of the forehead, in a way not too different from that of the element typical of the Eblaic royal turban of the Royal Archives age, well known from the steatite inlays of the relief friezes,

⁴² P. Matthiae, *Some Fragments of Early Syrian Sculpture from the Royal Palace G of Ebla*, JNES 39 (1980) 249–273; Matthiae et al. (eds), *Ebla* (1995) 298–299, 310, n. 63–64. Found in the south porch of the inner court L.2913, these two composite hair-dresses of exceptional workmanship, for the extraordinary graphic rendering of the hair, and for the admirable plastic structure of the heads, particularly the male one, quite likely belonged to the statues of a king and a queen, which might, though not for sure, be also mentioned in the Archives texts (Sollberger, ARET 8 [1986] 189, § 48: “4 minas [1.880 kg] of gold [for] two plinths of the statue[s] of the king [and the queen] that are [at] the ‘Wool House’ [Treasury]”), as also recalled by Archi, JNES 52 (2005) 96. Precisely the correspondence between this mention of statues of a king (and queen?), and the finding of the remains of the two heads, which have no element pointing to the fact that they might belong to deities, makes, on the other hand, unfounded the proposal of identification with statues of the gods Kura and Adabal advanced by Archi, *ibidem* 96–98.

⁴³ Matthiae, *Ebla* (1995) 101–104, fig. 18.

⁴⁴ F. Pinnock, *Of Servants and Priestesses. An Analysis of Some Female Characters in Mesopotamian and Syrian Art*, in H. Kühne [et al.] (eds.), *Proceedings of the 4th ICAANE*, 29 March–3 April 2004, Freie Universität Berlin, I (2008) 507–519. See also ead., *Notes about the Attire of High Rank Ladies in Old Syrian Ebla*, *Proceedings of the 3rd ICAANE*, Paris 2002, in press.

⁴⁵ The edges of the turban are on all sides clearly made by two thick swollen bands with crossing wool fleece, progressively growing in size to the back, and thinner in front. The upper part of the turban is, on the other hand, quite enigmatic: in fact, behind the two thick bands on the forehead, there clearly are two empty spaces, where the hair appears, separated by a thin band, also made of crossing bands, while the cloth of the turban apparently is again visible at the back, with a cap made of squares of alternating parallel lines.

from the wooden inlays of the ceremonial furniture, and from the figures in the contest scenes of palace glyptics.⁴⁶

From these considerations it seems clear that the turban, which seems the female counterpart of the Eblaic royal turban, and the other hairdo, also typical of royal female figures, were two different fashions used by the queens in the Ebla court in the Archives period. In fact, it is quite certain that we know three head- or hairdos of the en of Ebla in the age of the Royal Archives; so, it is also possible that the turban with the raised edge on the forehead, and the hair with compact curls were both characteristic of the *maliktum*'s image.

The royal hair-dresses without a hat are kept in the composite steatite hair-dresses, probably belonging to the heads of the royal couple's statues – though it is not possible to ascertain if living or dead – placed in the court in front of the Throne Room, and possibly mentioned in some text from the Archives.⁴⁷ The true royal head-dress of Ebla, on the other hand, probably was the elaborate turban, almost certainly made of wool, with swollen base, and raised center, already known in other art works of Ebla for the king, and now also attested for the queen.⁴⁸ Probably the

⁴⁶ P. Matthiae, *Appunti di iconografia eblaita*. I, *Il turbante regale (?) eblaita di Mardikh IIB1*, *Studi Eblaiti* 1 (1979) 17–31. The proposal of identification of this very peculiar turban known from glyptic, composite friezes in high relief, wooden inlays (Matthiae, *I tesori* [1985] pl. 42b) and from remains of statuettes in the round from the Royal Palace G, about which other elements of evidence were presented by F. Pinnock, *Le "turban royal éblaité"*, *NABU* (1992) 15–16, was accepted by P. R. S. Moorey, *A Stone Replica of an Early Dynastic III Royal Hairstyle?*, in: H. Gasche/B. Hrouda (eds), *Collectanea orientalia. Etudes offertes en hommage à A. Spycket* (Neuchâtel/Paris 1996) 236. M. G. Biga, *Les vêtements neufs de l'empereur*, *NABU* (1992) 19, proposed to identify this royal Eblaic turban with the *aktum-tûg tûgZ1.Z1* of the Archives texts, frequently given only to the king and to nobody else, a proposal which seems definitely acceptable.

⁴⁷ Matthiae, *JNES* 39 (1980) 249–273: the male hair-dress, unlike the female one, where apparently the long hair loose on the back was not covered by anything, might have included a small hat, about which no sound hypothesis may be presented; in fact, on the sides and back the hair is visible and worked in locks (*ibidem* fig. 8–10), in front there are heavy and swollen wavy locks ending with small vertical plaits, falling on the forehead, but no element was recovered to fill the quite large gap on top of the head. It can certainly be excluded that this empty space hosted the base of a peculiarly small cap, while it cannot be ruled out that, also considering the shape of the edges of the preserved plaques of the sides of the head (*ibidem* fig. 11), also the top of the head were completed possibly by two plaques, similar to the preserved ones, decorated with curving locks, which unlike the others were completely lost.

⁴⁸ This turban, about which see fn. 46, is preserved in stone plastic art with two kinds of specimen: on the one hand, when the turban was worked only in the front half, and had a flat back which had to adapt to a stone slab, or rather to a wooden plank (Mat-

third kind of royal head-dress was the war helmet attested in wooden inlays, as well as in remains of composite miniature statues,⁴⁹ which was probably quite similar to the helmet, also probably military, Naram-Suen of Akkad wears in the Pir Husseyn stele.⁵⁰

One must conclude that both figures in the miniature group represent, with every likeness, royal female figures. The standing lady, of bigger size, with bare head, wearing a smooth dress with a long fringe, and with one closed fist brought to her cheek should be the living young queen (Fig. 25). The sitting figure, of smaller size, wearing the female royal turban, a golden fleeced cloak, sitting on a gold covered stool and holding a cup in her hand, should represent the statue of a dead queen, probably deified (Fig. 26).

Therefore, the miniature group should represent the homage or veneration paid by a living queen to the statue of a deified dead queen. As has been maintained, in the sitting figure, the royal turban and the fleeced cloak seem to point to the fact that she was a queen, and the smaller size, the gold used for the cloak, and the stool and low dais on which the fig-

thiae et al. [eds], Ebla [1995] 301, n. 67: TM.80.G.225 [height 2,9 cm.; width 4,8 cm.]; Matthiae, I tesori [1985] pl. 44a–c: TM.77.G.544), it was a part of a representation in high relief, with the front facing figure of a king, as in the already mentioned wood inlay (Matthiae, I tesori [1985] pl. 42b), and, on the other hand, when the turban, usually smaller, was worked in the round (Matthiae et al. [eds], Ebla [1995] 300, n. 66: TM.89.G.268 [height 2,2 cm.; width 2,9 cm.]), it belonged to statuettes in the round, whose size was quite alike that of the standing female figure of silver and steatite, published here.

⁴⁹ This particular hair-dress, a helmet with quite a high cap, with horizontal sectors, each bearing parallel vertical marks, is preserved in an element in high relief of white limestone, with the back cut off and smooth (TM.78.G.276: height 3,5 cm.; width 6,0 cm.; thickness 4,8 cm., reproduced in Matthiae et al. [eds], Ebla [1995] 301, n. 68), in order to be applied, as usual, on a stone slab or a wooden plank, and in a limestone statue head found in a site of a few kilometres distance from Ebla, Atareb, certainly the same as Darib, where, according to a tradition of the Royal Archives, like in Binash, another site whose name is preserved in a modern village near Idlib, there were the funerary mausolea of ancient kings of Ebla, mentioned in the “Ritual of Kingship”: P. Matthiae, Appunti di iconografia eblaita, II. La testa di Atareb, Studi Eblaiti 2 (1980) 41–47, fig. 7a–e, 10a–b, 11–12.

⁵⁰ J. P. Naab/E. Unger, Die Entdeckung der Stele des Naram-Sin in Pir Hüseyin (Istanbul 1934) 39–41, pl. I; A. Moortgat, Die Kunst des Alten Mesopotamien (Köln 1967) 56, pl. 153. A helmet similar to the one attested at Ebla is also worn by Akkadian soldiers in the remains of the so-called “Nasiriyya Stele”, now in the Museum of Fine Arts of Boston, as well as in an Akkadian stele found at Susa: J. F. X. McKeon, An Akkadian Victory Stele, Boston Museum Bulletin 68 (1970) 226–243; Moortgat, Kunst (1967) 55, pl. 136–137; P. Amiet, L’art d’Agadé au Musée du Louvre (Paris 1976) 27–28, fig. 19, pl. 26.



Fig. 25: Damascus, National Museum: detail of the head of the standing female figure, probably queen Tabur-Damu, silver, TM.07.G.231, EB IVA, ca. 2300 B.C.



Fig. 26: Damascus, National Museum: detail of the head of the sitting female figure, probably queen Dusigu, limestone and steatite, TM.07.G.230, EB IVA, ca. 2300 B.C.

ure was placed should make it clear that this was a statue and not a living personage. The presence of the cup held in the hand should point to the fact that the queen represented in the statue was dead and probably deified.

This is a likely hypothesis, but the meaning of the cup held in the hand by a seated personage in royal statues in Syria in the following periods, though widely documented, is not clear: if, in fact, holding a cup seems to be an attitude reserved for royal figures, almost always, but not exclusively male, it is quite uncertain that it always meant that the king represented in the statue was dead.⁵¹ Of course there is no evidence for the Early Syrian period, but concerning the relatively numerous statues of sitting Old Syrian kings of Ebla, who usually hold a cup, it is impossible to say whether they represented living or dead sovereigns.⁵² It is likely that there was a difference between the statues of sitting kings dedicated probably always in temples and the statues of standing sovereigns placed in squares out in the open, or inside palaces: the hypothesis that the sitting statues in temples were of living kings, and those standing in squares

⁵¹ Of course, it is possible, but by no means certain, that in the figurative culture of Syria of the high Early Syrian period, until the Neo-Syrian period of the Aramaean kingdoms, the presence of the cup held by royal characters in statues had a constant meaning; yet this unity of meaning seems unlikely, or anyhow not probable when taking into account similar or comparable iconographies in the Mesopotamian world: for the latter ones see the considerations, certainly not valid for the Syrian world, by I. J. Winter, *The King and the Cup: Iconography of the Royal Presentation Scene on the Ur III Seals*, in: M. Kelly-Buccellati et al. (eds), *Insight through Images. Studies in Honor of E. Porada* (Malibu 1986) 253–286.

⁵² The largest amount of Old Syrian basalt statues of sitting kings holding a bowl in one hand leaning on the knee was published by P. Matthiae, *High Old Syrian Royal Statuary from Ebla*, in: B. Hrouda et al. (eds), *Von Uruk nach Tuttul. Eine Festschrift für E. Strommenger* (München 1992) 111–128, pl. 50–53; id., *Old Syrian Statuary and Carved Basins from Ebla. New Documents and Interpretations*, in: P. Butterlin et al. (eds.), *Les espaces syro-mésopotamiens. Volume d'hommage offert à J. Cl. Margueron*. Subartu 17 (Turnhout 2006) 423–438, fig. 1–5. From the finding places one may infer that these kings' statues were dedicated only in Ishtar's Temple (Area P) in the Lower Town north-west, in Ishtar's Temple (Area D) of the Citadel and in Temple HH2 (Area HH), possibly dedicated to Hadad, in the Lower Town south-east: Matthiae, *CRAIBL* (2006) 479–492, fig. 28. Two more statues of sitting characters may be brought as a comparison, one with one person, and a couple, perhaps royal, of a much more cursory handicraft, found at Taftanaz, north of Ebla, published as Late Syrian specimens by D. Bonatz, *Das syro-hethitische Grabdenkmal* (Mainz 2000) 15–16, n. B1, B10, pl. V–VI; we would rather accept the attribution to the Old Syrian period proposed by R. Hempelmann, *Zur Datierung von drei Statuen aus Taftanaz*, in: R. Dittmann et al. (eds), *Alturumswissenschaften im Dialog. Festschrift für W. Nagel* (Münster 2003) 291–299.

and palaces were deified royal ancestors is quite likely, but not completely sure.⁵³

In favour of the hypothesis that, at least as far as kings are concerned, the representations of sitting sovereigns holding a cup were deified royal ancestors, one may recall the evidence of some, albeit rare impressions of the so-called Syro-Anatolian or Syrian colony style cylinder seals from Kültepe *kārum* II. In fact, there one may see a standing king wearing the typical Eblaic royal tiara, advancing in attitude of homage or veneration towards a sitting personage holding a cup, also wearing the identical royal tiara:⁵⁴ the only possible interpretation for this kind of scene seems to be that a living king pays homage to the statue of a dead sovereign, probably deified, who, for some as yet unknown reason, holds a cup.⁵⁵

⁵³ This hypothesis was proposed by P. Matthiae, A Statue Base from the Western Palace of Ebla and the Continuity of the Old Syrian Artistic Tradition, in: R. Dittmann et al. (eds), *Variatio delectat. Gedenkschrift für P. Calmeyer* (Münster 2000) 395–397. Besides the monumental basalt base of a standing statue from the Western Palace, two more bases, also depicting two roaring lions and a king's figure sitting between the two lions, one of which intact (TM.96.P.470A+B), and remains of the lower parts of the same statues (TM.96.P.460) were found in the Square of Cisterns in front of Ishtar's Temple in the Lower Town (Area P): P. Matthiae, *Les fortifications d'Ebla paléo-syrienne: Fouilles à Tell Mardikh* (1995–1997), CRAIBL (1998) 568–570, fig. 7–9. Recently also Bonatz, *Grabdenkmal* (2000) 105–106, maintained that the typology of the royal statue standing on a base with two lions points at the king's deification and immortality.

⁵⁴ B. Teissier, *Sealing and Seals on Texts from Kültepe kārum Level 2* (Leiden 1994) 234–236, n. 526, 540, 546: in some other seals the sitting king holding the bowl wears the skull-cap of Mesopotamian type (*ibidem*, n. 533, 538, 545), and in other impressions, where a god wearing the horned tiara and tramping on a lying enemy, walks towards the sitting character holding the bowl, the latter apparently does not wear a cap (*ibidem*, n. 550, 552). The difficulty of interpretation of these scenes is quite clear, when one takes into account that in other, more frequent scenes, the king wearing the peaked cap walks towards, or pours a libation to a sitting god holding a bowl (*ibidem*, n. 528, 529, 530, 536). About the archaic Old Syrian royal tiara, the peaked cap, which appears in these impressions, and is the same as that the Ebla king wears in the ritual basins with banquet scenes from Ishtar's Temple (Area D) of the Citadel and of Ras-hap's Temple (Area B) in the Lower Town Lower Town, see B. Teissier, *The Ruler with the Peaked Cap and other Syrian Iconography from Kültepe in the Early Second Millennium*, in: M. J. Mellink et al. (eds.), *Aspects of Art and Iconography. Studies in Honor of N. Özgüç* (Ankara 1993) 601–612.

⁵⁵ The circumstance that the sitting figure holding a bowl towards whom the king, and/or other mortal characters advance alternatively wears the same peaked cap, the Mesopotamian royal cap, the horned tiara or does not wear any tiara may be explained in three cases out of four; in fact, the Syrian peaked cap and the Mesopotamian cap are merely two variants of royal crowns, probably used in different Syrian towns. The representation of the character without tiara, found in the scene of the funerary banquet in the funerary talisman from the Tomb of the Lord of the Goats at

One may also add to this argument that, at least in the Late Syrian statues of Iron Age II, female funerary statues are known, which represent sitting personages, almost certainly royal, holding a cup in the hand leaning on the knee.⁵⁶

The attitude of the standing queen, who holds one hand at the waist, and the other one to the face, with the closed fist leaning on her cheek, is certainly unusual in the art of the ancient Near East, and is not present even in the rich figurative repertory of Old Syrian glyptic. However, this theme can be found again in the funerary art of Palmyra, which leads to believe that in the Syrian world this gesture was the expression of some kind of sorrowful meditation typical of funerary contexts, and it may possibly date back with the same meaning to the high Early Syrian art of the second half of the IIIrd millennium BC.⁵⁷

Ebla, should hint at one moment of the funerary celebrations for the king, when evidently he did not wear a crown: Matthiae et al. (eds.), Ebla (1995) 505, n. 470. There are difficulties in the interpretation of the sitting characters holding a bowl as the only intact statue from Ebla, which was not destroyed by the conquerors, without tiara, without the royal cloak, and holding a curved weapon, which might have some analogy with the pastoral of the protagonist of the banquet on the funerary talisman; it should represent a priest or an official, not a king: Matthiae, in: Fs. Strommenger (see n. 52) pl. 50. As regards on the other hand the sitting figures with bowl wearing the horned divine tiara, there is no doubt that they are always deities, not deified kings, because they sometimes have certainly divine iconographies, probably related with sun gods, like the flames sprouting from the shoulders: Teissier, Sealing (1994) n. 534, 581; however, the meaning of the bowl held by these deities in their outstretched hands seems the same as for the figures looking as deified kings, also because quite often, in all the representations of these characters, a bird, possibly a dove, seems to be drinking from the bowl.

⁵⁶ A. Moortgat, Tell Halaf III: Die Bildwerke (Berlin 1955) 7–8, 35–37, n. A1, A2, pl. 1–9: the two statues of sitting female figures, coming from the “Lehmziegelmassiv” are certainly funerary. J. Voos, Studien zur Rolle von Statuen und Reliefs im syro-hethitischen Totenkult während der frühen Eisenzeit (etwa 10.–7. Jh.v.u.Z.), EAZ 29 (1988) 347–362, maintained that these statues from Guzana were a sure evidence for the cult of royal ancestors, and, recently, more in detail Bonatz, Grabdenkmal (2000) 154–155, has confirmed this hypothesis.

⁵⁷ Only as examples one may see a tomb relief with a figure of a seated young girl of the 1st century A.D. and a funerary relief with a couple leaning on large pillows, dated from 150–175 A.D., both in the National Museum of Damascus (nos 24 and 18802): H. Weiss (ed.), Ebla to Damascus. Art and Archaeology of Ancient Syria, An Exhibition. Washington 1985 (1985) 392–393, 398–399, nos 185, 190; see also the funerary relief with a lady and her son of the Museo Nazionale d’Arte Orientale, Roma, 3rd century A.D.: Zenobia. Il sogno di una regina d’Oriente. Mostra, Torino 13 febbraio–26 maggio 2002 (2002) 22, fig. 5. Some considerations on this gesture in Greek and Roman art may be found in S. Settis, Immagini della meditazione, dell’incertezza e del pentimento nell’arte antica, Prospettiva 1 (1975) 4–18.

The miniature group of the standing living queen paying homage to the statue of a possibly deified dead queen, reconstructed as upper part of a precious royal standard, probably used during important ceremonial occasions in the Royal Palace G, is certainly exceptional and unique in the art of the IIIrd millennium BC in Syria, and in Mesopotamia. However, the kind of object reconstructed is documented in several, though not frequent, figurative works of the same decades, to which the high Early Syrian standard of Ebla belongs.⁵⁸ So, though the relief is fragmentary, certainly the standard which appears in Eannatum's stela, carrying only the figure of the lion-headed eagle Imdugud/Anzu with widespread wings, symbol of the god Ningirsu, patron deity of Lagash, was of the same type.⁵⁹

On the contrary, the excavator's reconstruction as a standard of some elements of inlay, certainly belonging to the so-called "Standard of Mari" from Ishtar's Temple in the metropolis on the Middle Euphrates seems unlikely: a striding bull's figure on a base over two rings set side by side, was, quite arbitrarily, integrated on a pole held by a parading official, while it should rather be interpreted as the upper end of a ring of a chariot rein.⁶⁰ These Early Dynastic IIb metal chariot rein-rings are particu-

⁵⁸ Though in the two monuments the upper terminal part of the scene is completely missing, it is quite likely that a standard with a figurative image was held by two characters represented in two Early Dynastic III stelae, one of which from Ur (U.1782) with the remains of an inscription, which apparently recalls the genealogy of Ur-Nanshe: L. Woolley, *Ur Excavations IV, The Early Periods* (1956) 46, pl. 39d; Börker-Klähn, *Altvorderasiatische Bildstelen* (1982) 120, 123, n. 12, 15. For a later period, the considerations about the correspondence between represented standards and real standards proposed by E. Porada are still important: *Standards and Stools on Sealings of Nuzi and Other Examples of Mitannian Glyptic Art*, in *XX RAI Leiden 1972* (1975) 164–172.

⁵⁹ Moortgat, *Kunst* (1967) 48, pl. 18–121; M.-Th. Barrelet, *Peut-on remettre en question la "Restitution matérielle de la Stèle des Vautours"?*, *JNES* 29 (1970) 233–258; A. Becker, *Neusumerische Renaissance? Wissenschaftsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Philologie und Archäologie*, *BaM* 16 (1985) 283–286; I. J. Winter, *After the Battle is Over: The Stele of the Vultures and the Beginning of the Historical Narrative in the Art of the Ancient Near East*, in: *Pictorial Narrative in Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Studies in the History of Art 16* (Washington 1985) 11–32; ead., *Eannatum and the "King of Kish"?* Another Look at the Stele of the Vultures and "Cartouches" in Early Sumerian Art, *ZA* 76 (1986) 205–212; B. Alster, *Images and Text on the Stele of the Vultures*, *AfO* 50 (2004) 1–10; L. Romano, *La Stele degli Avvoltoi: Una rilettura critica*, *VO* 13 (2007) 3–23.

⁶⁰ Parrot, *Temple d'Ishtar* (1956) 136–141, 145, n. M.458, M.459, fig. 81, 87, pl. LVI, LVIIc. Already P. Calmeyer, *Zur Rekonstruktion der "Standarte" von Mari*, in: *XV RAI, Liège 1966* (Paris 1967) 162–169, fig. 6 criticised A. Parrot's reconstruction, rightly maintaining that the object represented was not the top of a standard, but precisely the top of a chariot rein-ring of a well known type, preserved in copper and bronze, discovered at Kish and Ur, and also with not rare specimens coming from the antique market: P. Cal-

larly interesting, because the connecting element between the bull figure at the top and the stem at the bottom includes a double ring whose size is certainly quite similar to that of the bronze ring collected in the room of the Royal Palace G of Ebla, where the two female figures and the bronze incense burner were found.⁶¹

The ceremonial use of standards on high poles, always of the same kind, with figures in the round on the top is also documented by the representation of the two officials following Naram-Suen in the famous stele celebrating his victory over the Lullubeans.⁶² In the Syrian world, while of course there is no figurative representation of the use of standards in the Early Syrian period, in Old Syrian glyptic there are some rare instances of a sacred standard with a deity's head⁶³ and some frequent ones of a peculiar cult standard with two heads and a bird, which was related with the *semeion* described in *De Dea Syra*, attributed to Lucian of Samosata.⁶⁴ This standard depicted in several archaic Old Syrian cylinder

meyer, Archaische Zügelringe, in: K. Bittel et al. (eds.), Vorderasiatische Archäologie. Studien und Aufsätze A. Moortgat gewidmet (Berlin 1964) 68–84.

⁶¹ E. A. Braun-Holzinger, Figürliche Bronzen aus Mesopotamien. PBF I, 4 (München 1984) 33–37, n. 97–114; O. W. Muscarella, Bronze and Iron. Ancient Near Eastern Artifacts in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York 1988) 329–333, n. 466.

⁶² Moortgat, Kunst (1967) 57 pl. 155–156; L. Nigro, Per una analisi formale dello schema compositivo della Stele di Naram-Sin, CMAO 4 (1992) 61–100. Börker-Klähn, Altvorderasiatische Bildstelen (Mainz 1982) 134–136, n. 26a–k: really, though with some difficulty due to the important degradation of the stele surface in the spots where the officials of the king of Akkad are represented, the presence of standards held by the second and third official following the king is sure, as two more Akkadian officials hold two long poles in the same way: the first one behind the king on the upper mountain path, and the third one advancing along the lower mountain path; however, the official closest to the king apparently holds a spear, while the lower one might have held a standard, whose upper end seems lost. In the reconstructions proposed by Börker-Klähn, *ibidem*, n. 26k, Naram-Suen's standards should represent in two instances an eagle with wide-spread wings, and in one instance the insignia with five globes well known by a Neo-Sumerian fragment (Louvre AO.4581) of the stele of Gudea of Lagash, found at Girsu: *ibidem*, 148, n. 63a. About these different standards see now the contribution by R. Mayer-Opificius, Feldzeichen, in: Gasche/Hrouda (eds.), Études A. Spycket (1996) 213–226, who, like B. Pongratz-Leisten/K. Deller/E. Bleibtreu, Götterstreitwagen und Götterstandarten: Götter auf dem Feldzug und ihr Kult im Feldlager, BaM 23 (1992) 291–325, believes that Eannatum's and Naram-Suen's standards were gods' insignia, belonging to Ningirsu, Nanshe, and Ishtar.

⁶³ See, e.g., E. Porada, Corpus of Ancient Near Eastern Seals in North American Collections I: The Collection of Pierpont Morgan Library (Washington 1948) 127, n. 956, pl. CXLV.

⁶⁴ The hypothesis that the famous *semeion* of Atargatis, Assyrian Hera, in the Temple at Hierapolis of Syria was the ancient standard depicted in several Old Syrian seals was quite acutely proposed by H. Seyrig, Antiquités Syriennes 78: Les dieux de Hiérapolis, Syria 37 (1960) 233–240, 251–252, fig. 1–3, pl. IX.

seals, and in particular in three seals discovered at Ebla, was probably erected in the great Ishtar's Temple in the Lower Town (Area P) of Ebla.⁶⁵

Although the reconstructed standard from the Royal Palace G of Ebla may be similar in size and structure to those used at Lagash, Mari, Ur and Akkad,⁶⁶ the subject of the precious miniature group placed on top of the standard, makes it sure that it did not belong to court officials, but rather to a queen of Ebla, as it was stored, as we have seen, in one room of the Northern Quarter. Evidently it was ready to be used in ceremonies, which probably took place in the adjacent Court of Audience. As the different elements composing the standard were all found in the destruction level of the room, she was in all likelihood the last queen of Ebla, ruling the town at the time of the capture and sack of the town by Sargon of Akkad, who certainly set the palace on fire.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ This proposal was advanced by P. Matthiae, *L'Aire Sacrée d'Ishtar à Ebla: Résultats des fouilles de 1990–1992*, CRAIBL (1993) 659–662, fig. 25. A complete catalogue of the seals where the presumed ancestor of the *semeion* appears, and a development of the proposal will appear in P. Matthiae, *L'ancêtre du *seméion* de Hiéropolis à Ebla*, RA in press.

⁶⁶ The ending part of a bronze standard, figurative as well, like those of Eannatum, Naram-Suen, and Gudea, kept with two specimens at least in the Louvre (AO.2397) and in the Royal Ontario Museum of Toronto (Coll. Sarre), but featuring a circle, inside which there are four apparently running figures, repeating a peculiar figurative motif of the Akkadian period, is usually believed to be an Iranian work of the Old Babylonian period: P. Calmeyer, *Datierbare Bronzen aus Luristan und Kirmanshah* (München 1969) 50–52, fig. 51; Braun-Holzinger, *Figürliche Bronzen* (1992) 59–60, n. 203–304, pl. 45: these are usually called “Waffentanzstandarten”, and, however, beyond the military, royal and temple ceremonial uses, they are the evidence for the use of ceremonial standards with different figures, not with symbolic images of deities. Notwithstanding the presumed provenance from Iran of these two endings of standards, it seems we should take into account the possibility of a north Syrian provenance for the presence of the ring with the four full-face rotating heroes, each holding a vase in his left hand, in some, though quite rare, Old Syrian cylinder seals: A. Erkanal, *Die in Anatolien vorkommenden altsyrischen Siegel und Siegelabdrücke* (1992) 15–16, n. I-A/04, pl. 2 (from Kültepe *kārum* Ib); D. Collon, *The Seal Impressions from Tell Atchana/Alalakh* (1975) 59–60, n. 109 (from Alalakh VII Palace); B. Buchanan, *Early Near Eastern Seals in the Yale Babylonian Collection* (New Haven 1981) 432–433, n. 1263 (Newell Collection n. 345); B. Teissier, *Ancient Near Eastern Cylinder Seals from the Marcopoli Collection* (1984) 276–277, 326, n. 557. Moortgat, *Kunst* (1967) 96, pl. 223 attributes to the end of the Ist Dynasty of Babylon a marble disk, found in Babylon, with the four rotating heroes, a motif also attested in the clay moulds of Mari Palace: A. Parrot, *Mission Archéologique de Mari II: Le Palais 3: Documents et monuments* (Paris 1959) 36, n. 1129, fig. 30, pl. XVII.

⁶⁷ This author still maintains that the great destruction of Mardikh IIB1, and therefore of the Royal Palace G (Area G) and of the Temple of the Rock (Area HH) must be attributed to Sargon of Akkad: P. Matthiae, *The destruction of Ebla Royal Palace: In-*

Now, the texts concerning Ishar-Damu's marriage⁶⁸ are well known from the Royal Archives: he ruled Ebla when it was conquered and sacked. Moreover, it was also possible to identify for certain the name of the *maliktum* sitting on the throne at the time of that tragic event: Tabur-Damu, who in one text at least is recalled as being the *maliktum*.⁶⁹

terconnections between Syria, Mesopotamia and Egypt in Late EB IVA, in: P. Åström (ed.), *High, Middle or Low? Acts of the International Colloquium on Absolute Chronology Held at the University of Gothenburg 20th–22nd August 1987* (Gothenburg 1989) III, 163–169; Ebla (1995) 241–250; id., *Gli Archivi* (2008) 95–110. The important reconstruction of the victorious military campaign against Mari, accomplished by Ibbi-Zikir at the end of Ishar-Damu's reign, by A. Archi/M. G. Biga, *A Victory over Mari and the Fall of Ebla*, *JCS* 55 (2008) 1–44, which seems fully acceptable, does by no means imply, as proposed in that contribution, that Ishgi-Mari destroyed the Royal Palace G of Ebla, only because that king of Mari, who probably ruled immediately after the last king of Mari mentioned in the Ebla texts, celebrated a victory of his over an unmentioned enemy in an important cylinder seal recently discovered: D. Beyer, *Les sceaux de Mari au IIIe millénaire: observations sur la documentation ancienne et les données nouvelles*, *Ah Purattim* 1 (2006) 128–137; J.-Cl. Margueron, *Mari. Métropole de l'Euphrate au IIIe et au début du IIe millénaire av. J.C.* (Paris 2004) 311. On the contrary, particularly interesting and suggestive is the proposal by W. Sallaberger, *Relative Chronologie von der späten frühdynastischen bis zur altbabylonischen Zeit*, in J.-W. Meyer/W. Sommerfeld (eds.), *2000 v. Chr. Politische, wirtschaftliche und kulturelle Entwicklung im Zeichen einer Jahrtausendwende. 3. Internationales Colloquium der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft 4.–7. April 2000* (Saarbrücken 2004) 15–43, to recognise a mention of Sargon of Akkad in a text from Ebla, mentioning an anonymous lord of Kish, with his son Ishkunnunu of Kish.

⁶⁸ About the identification of the yearly account of metals TM.75.G.1730 as an administrative duplicate of the ritual text ARET 11, 2, concerning Ishar-Damu's marriage with the queen: M. G. Biga, *Osservazioni sui criteri di redazione dei testi di Ebla: TM.75.G.1730 e i testi del rituale per il re e la regina*, *VO* 8 (1992) 3–11. Later on M. G. Biga identified two monthly texts of textiles, thus far unpublished (TM.75.G.2417 and TM.75.G.2164), both concerning expenditures of textiles for the ritual of ARET 11, 2 made by king Ishar-Damu and by the queen: M. G. Biga, *Prosopographie et datation relatives des textes d'Ebla*, *Amurru* 1 (2006) 48; ead., *Rituali regali eblaiti e loro riflessi nei testi amministrativi*, *Isimu* 1 (1998) 214–216. These studies are also important for the proposal – to be shared – that the kingship ritual is not a ritual for the royal wedding, but a ritual of kingship renewal for a ceremony which, as concerns Ishar-Damu, took place after his wedding with Tabur-Damu: M. G. Biga, *The “Marriage” of Ebla's King Ishar-Damu as Documented by the Contemporary Administrative Texts*, Or. in press.

⁶⁹ About Tabur-Damu, in general, see M. G. Biga/F. Pomponio, *Elements for a Chronological Division of the Administrative Documentation of Ebla*, *JCS* 42 (1990) 179–201; M. G. Biga, *Donne alla corte di Ebla*, *PdP* 46 (1991) 285–303; M. G. Biga/F. Pomponio, *Critères de rédaction comptable et chronologie relative des textes d'Ebla*, *MARI* 7 (1993) 108–110. The text where Tabur-Damu's name is followed by the expression “queen of Ebla” is the account of textiles TM.75.G.2417, where one may read “following a good omen given by [Dusigu] the king's mother, Tabur-Damu

On the other hand, it is well known from quite a few texts dating from Ishar-Damu's first years of his reign, that for several years after his predecessor Irkab-Damu's death, the queen mother Dusigu played an important role in the court, outliving her husband Irkab-Damu for quite a number of years.⁷⁰ Dusigu's death is clearly remembered in the economic texts for particularly rich obsequies, which took place during Ibbi-Zikir's third year as vizier, that is, three years after the death of the previous vizier Ibrium: this sad event gave its name to one year of Ishar-Damu's reign, precisely called "year in which the king's great mother died".⁷¹

In fact, until her death, Dusigu kept the first place among the ladies of her son Ishar-Damu's harem, while after her death this place was taken by Tabur-Damu, the king's wife.

This particular situation in Ishar-Damu's court was evidently due to Dusigu's special prestige and strong authority as well as probably to Ishar-Damu's young age. It seems quite likely that in the standard of

may become queen of Ebla", and which was studied by M. G. Biga, *Omens and Divination at Ebla*, NABU 1999/109.

⁷⁰ Dusigu's figure was studied in detail by M. G. Biga, *Femmes de la famille royale d'Ebla*, in: J.-M. Durand (ed.), *La femme dans le Proche-Orient* (Paris 1987) 41–47; Biga/Pomponio, JCS 42 (1990) 179–193; in particular for a reconstruction of the chronology of the texts on the base of the presence of Irkab-Damu, Dusigu, Tabur-Damu: Biga, PdP 46 (1991) 287–290. As a consequence of the fact that king Irkab-Damu was early widowed (for other wives of Irkab-Damu's, see A. Archi, *Les femmes du roi Irkab-Damu*, *Amurru* 1 [1996] 101–124), during the whole final phase of his rule, in vizier Arrukum's time, Dusigu took a more and more important role among his wives; yet, she never appears in the texts by the official title of *maliktum*. This role became even more important when, in a very short time, her son Ishar-Damu ascended his deceased father Irkab-Damu's throne and the powerful Ibrium became vizier; the latter might be a relative of Dusigu's, as he owned a village called Dusigu like the deceased king's wife: M. G. Biga, *The Reconstruction of a Relative Chronology for the Ebla Texts*, *Or.* 72 (2003) 354–356.

⁷¹ Concerning Dusigu's death note the important considerations by Biga/Pomponio, JCS 42 (1990) 187–188, and Biga, *Amurru* 1 (1996) 48–50, where two parallel texts are identified, one concerning metals, and the other one concerning textiles, registering goods delivered to Dusigu for her tomb, which in fact appear in both accounts; these data were recently examined again by A. Archi, *Jewels for the Ladies of Ebla*, *ZA* 92 (2002) 161–199. Though at the beginning of the prosopographic studies about the Royal Archives texts it was believed that Ibrium were Irkab-Damu's vizier for quite a long time, now it seems quite certain that he was vizier for the whole time, or for a large part of time, during the first part of Ishar-Damu's rule, for 18 years, as his son Ibbi-Zikir became vizier after him, without gaps; therefore, the queen mother Dusigu's death, which took place during Ibbi-Zikir's 3rd year, should be dated to her son Ishar-Damu's 21st year: A. Archi, *La formazione di uno stato del III millennio a. C.*, PdP 46 (1991) 195–210; id., *The 'Lords', lugal-lugal, of Ebla. A Prosopographic Study*, *VO* 12 (2000) 19–58.

Ishar-Damu's wife, certainly created in the last years of her reign, Tabur-Damu, the reigning queen, was represented while paying homage to Dusigu's statue,⁷² image of the deceased authoritative queen mother, who might have been deified, as king's wife, as happened with Irkab-Damu himself, though no trace of this process is to be found in the Archives.⁷³ According to this interpretation, Tabur-Damu's standard, with the image of the possibly deified Dusigu, was made after Ibbi-Zikir's third year as vizier.

The texts of the Royal Archives confirm the existence of statues of important ladies of the court deceased for some time. In fact, in the economic texts of the Archives registrations of offerings of textiles are well attested for personages of a very high rank, certainly deceased, among whom kings, queens, and more seldom high officials.⁷⁴ It is therefore evident that these were luxurious clothes, probably placed on the statues they used during funerary ceremonies.

The evidence concerning Dusigu herself and the powerful Ibrium is illustrative: several years after their deaths deliveries of textiles are registered, evidently for their funerary statues. In fact, on the occasion of the death of one of Dusigu's brothers, the documents recall the delivery of a textile for Dusigu, who had certainly died before her brother. On the other hand, on the occasion of Teshma-Damu's death, the wife of Ibbi-Zikir, head of the administration, which took place ten years after her husband took on that high position, they registered deliveries of textiles for Ibrium, who had died ten years before, leaving power to his son Ibbi-Zikir, and for another wife of Ibbi-Zikir's, who had died some years before.⁷⁵

⁷² To confirm this hypothesis one may also note that, in fact, in the standing queen's figure, whose face is quite round, with smooth features, and whose breast is buxom, they wished to depict a young, attractive woman; on the contrary, the very expressive face of the sitting queen has quite lean features, slightly prominent nose, and the neck marked by a fold of the skin, which seem to point to a woman at least of middle age, or rather old. These characteristics correspond well, in the first case, to young Tabur-Damu, and in the second case, to Dusigu, who certainly died in quite an advanced age, several years after her husband Irkab-Damu.

⁷³ Irkab-Damu's name has the divine determinative in the list of ten kings of Ebla dead and deified, published by Archi, ARET 7, 150. See also id., *Die ersten zehn Könige von Ebla*, ZA 76 (1986) 213–217.

⁷⁴ About these offerings, after some indications given by Archi, ZA 92 (2002) 183–184, detailed references are found in M. G. Biga, *Buried among the Living at Ebla? Funerary Practices and Rites in a XXIV Cent. B.C. Syrian Kingdom*, ScAnt 14 (2007) 139–140.

⁷⁵ It is the text TM.75.G.1829 rev. ii 1–iii 1; in much the same way in a text dating from between vizier Ibbi-Zikir's first and third year, where the death of a wife of Ibbi-Zikir's is recalled, gifts of textiles for the deceased Ibrium are registered (TM.75.G.2435+ obv. xi 6–14). Two other texts at least have a special meaning in order to show how the

In these registrations statues of the dead persons are not mentioned, but in order to proof the existence of funerary statues of queens one may recall an older mention, dating from the time when Ibrium was still the head of the administration. In an account from the thirteenth year when this powerful official was vizier, on the occasion of the obsequies of Rabatum, Irkab-Damu's wife, they registered textiles for Rabatum "for the tomb", but also "for Tinud's, the king's wife, statue, for the tomb".⁷⁶ It is thus an explicit evidence of the fact that for the obsequies of one of Irkab-Damu's wives, they offered clothes for the statue of another of the king's wives, deceased previously, and probably buried in the same tomb.⁷⁷

practice to present offerings of textiles for illustrious deceased personages was spread, particularly in the occasion of funerals of court officials: in Ibbi-Zikir's tenth year as vizier, for the death of Tisha-Lim, queen of Emar, certainly of Eblaic descent and possibly belonging to Ibrium's family, they offered textiles to Ibrium (TM.75.G.1763 obv. vi' 4-7), and in a text where they recalled the death of Ibrium's wife, who was Ibbi-Zikir's mother, textiles were given to the king's great mother, to two previous kings of Ebla, and to Ibrium, who all had died (TM.75.G.12116 obv. iii' 1'): Biga, *ScAnt* 14 (2007) 140. These offerings of textiles to dead male and female personages usually take place on the occasion of funerals, which seems to hint that in those occasions these personages' funerary statues were probably adorned in some special way in order to take part in the funerary rites.

⁷⁶ This quotation, which is obviously very important for the presence of dead queens' statues, clearly related with the deceased's tomb, is found in the account TM.75.G.10079 rev. x 4-14, and was published by Biga, *ScAnt* 14 (2007) 140: according to M. G. Biga, this text seems plausibly to prove the existence of statues of important dead personages of the court, and suggests the possible existence of a large royal tomb where all the dead members of the royal family were buried, as well as of a large tomb for Ibrium's family.

⁷⁷ If we accept M. G. Biga's hypothesis, mentioned in the previous footnote, of the existence of a large royal tomb where at least the most important members of the royal family were buried, and in particular some of the higher rank wives of the king, one may infer that this tomb of Irkab-Damu and his main wives were the large royal hypogaeum, called Hypogaeum G4, completely sacked and partially destroyed, of excellent building technique, found below the collapsed floors of the West Unit of the Central Complex of the Royal Palace G on the Acropolis of Tell Mardikh, about whose discovery see P. Matthiae, *Fouilles à Ebla en 1993-1994: Les palais de la Ville Basse nord*, CRAIBL (1995) 654-659, fig. 3-5; id., *Les fortifications d'Ebla paléo-syrienne: Fouilles à Tell Mardikh (1995-1997)*, CRAIBL (1998) 561-563, fig. 3-4. According to this hypothesis, the usual typology with two rooms of several royal hypogea at Mari, below the "Palais des Shakkanakku", at Tuttul, below the "Jüngerer Palast", and at Ebla, below the Royal Palace G might be a consequence of the planned presence in these large royal tombs of several at least of the king's wives: J. Margueron, *Une tombe monumentale à Mari: MARI 3* (1984) 197-215; E. Strommenger et al., *Ausgrabungen in Tall Bi'a 1982 und 1983*, MDOG 116 (1984) 29-32; ead., *Ausgrabungen in Tall Bi'a 1987*, MDOG 121 (1989) 15-17. General considerations about Hypogaeum G4 of Ebla are to be found in P. Matthiae, *Where Were the Early Syrian Kings of Ebla Buried?*, *AoF* 24 (1991 = *Fs. Klengel*) 268-276.

Therefore, the texts of the Royal Archives clearly attest to that queens' funerary statues existed, that they were probably placed near the tombs, and that they had to be displayed at particular ceremonial occasions.⁷⁸ One of these statues of a deceased queen, Dusigu, deified perhaps, should be represented in the standard discovered in the northern Quarter of the Royal Palace G, apparently the property of Tabur-Damu, Ishar-Damu's wife.⁷⁹

The combined evidence of all these elements, archaeological and textual, leads us to believe that it is quite likely that, firstly, the two statues and the incense-burner were parts of a miniature group, placed at the top of a ceremonial standard, that, secondly, the group represented the adoration of a deified dead queen's statue by the living queen, and that, lastly, this standard belonged to Tabur-Damu, king Ishar-Damu's wife, represented while paying homage to the queen mother Dusigu's, Irkab-Damu's wife, statue.

⁷⁸ The hypothesis that these funerary statues might be exposed during special ceremonial occasions was proposed by Archi, *ZA* 92 (2002) 183–183. For the later period, between Middle Bronze II and Late Bronze I, an important proof of the existence in Northern Syria of funerary royal statues located in front of a royal tomb or hypogaeum in close relation to the royal palace came in 2002 from Qatna from the discovery of the two admirable statues of sitting kings with a bowl in the right hand, stylistically strongly related to the royal head found in the palace of Alalakh VII and to the Ebla royal statuery of Mardikh IIIB: (see fn 52): M. Novák/P. Pfälzner/G. Elsen-Novák, *Ausgrabungen im bronzezeitlichen Palast von Tall Mišrife/Qatna 2002. Vorbericht der deutschen Komponente des internationalen Kooperationsprojektes*, *MDOG* 135 (2003) 156–160, fig. 17–20; P. Pfälzner, *The Royal Palace at Qatna: Power and Prestige in the Late Bronze Age*, in: J. Aruz et al. (eds.), *Beyond Babylon. Art, Trade, and Diplomacy in the Second Millennium B.C.* (New Haven 2008) 220–221, fig. 72–74.

⁷⁹ We cannot rule out the possibility, as M. G. Biga suggests, that the standard was related to funerary rituals, possibly made during the night, apparently exclusively for females, as the one studied by M. G. Biga, *A Ritual from Archive L.2712 of Ebla*, in: *Semitic and Assyriological Studies Presented to P. Fronzaroli* (Wiesbaden 2003) 54–69.