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## **Mesopotamian Intraregional Relations Reflected through Glyptic Evidence in the Late Chalcolithic 1–5 Periods**

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The era of state formation in Mesopotamia is known through myriad archaeological details. Scholars apply interpretative strategies or models to those archaeological data in order to interpret them and assign coherent meanings. Among the data long available for interpretation is abundant evidence for a remarkable increase in the use and variety of products of symbolic behavior within the domain of what can be broadly construed as administration. This increase apparently reflects a desire on the part of the ancients to record details of human relations within their communities in ways that would allow for their reconstruction without relying solely on human memory. We have large and well-organized samples of the material residues of this ancient symbolic behavior. With it, some six thousand years later, we can attempt to reconstruct the outlines of those ancient relations. With the benefit of hindsight, our analyses can extend over long periods, encompassing the millennium between approximately 4200 and 3000 B.C. during which states formed for the first time in southern Mesopotamia. The administrative evidence consists of both the symbolic messages and the media on which they were carried, including glyptic art, series of

intentional marks, and various document types. This discussion will focus on glyptic art found on seals and sealings. Examples of glyptic art will be examined as a measure of the changing regional character as well as of the extent and intensity of contact between regions during the millennium of Mesopotamian state formation. Such an analysis must be integrated with others focused on other data categories and combined with theoretical reconstruction in order to acquire any explanatory power.

Glyptic art is a hallmark of ancient Near Eastern cultures. It first appears in the seventh millennium B.C. and continues in essentially uninterrupted use until Hellenistic times. Whenever we find seal-impressed clay masses—either as freestanding documents or as locking devices—we identify them as residue of administrative activity broadly construed. Although there is no agreement on the specific cultural value of imagery carried by glyptic art, from its origin, glyptic was used to make repeating impressions of images on malleable material, most commonly clay. It is, indeed, the infinitely reproducible nature of this impressed mark that gives glyptic its unique administrative value. The capacity of imagery carried on clay to store and transmit information is the trait that enables these actions to be understood as administrative. The seals also served other symbolic purposes, acting as amulets as well as votive objects and objects appropriate as burial goods.

State formation in Mesopotamia is closely associated with the Uruk horizon, which is defined on the basis of a ceramic sequence constructed from sites in southern Mesopotamia, most notably Nippur and Uruk-Warka. The Uruk horizon has been dated to the late fifth and fourth millennia B.C. through radiocarbon analysis (see Wright and Rupley, this volume). The presence of diagnostic ceramic types in regions beyond the southern Mesopotamian heartland suggests that the process of state formation in the south was not solely a local development. Indeed, the distribution of ceramics together with architectural and other artifactual evidence indicates that long-distance relations played an important, and perhaps seminal, role in the evolution of social complexity and underlies the formation of Mesopotamian states. The goal of this discussion is to enrich the texture of our description of these interregional relations. Sustained attention to glyptic art, which was one of the essential symbolic technologies used to mediate

human interactions during this process of radical social change, provides an essential tool.

Glyptic art, together with the evidence of its use, is widespread during the Uruk period (Late Chalcolithic [LC] 1–5) and has served as a marker for the state formation process. In that respect, it is like the ubiquitous beveled-rim bowl of the Uruk period. At the simplest level of analysis, presence (or absence) of seals and sealings tells us about information-processing behavior. When treated comprehensively, glyptic artifacts, like ceramic evidence, allow us to measure degrees of similarity and difference among human communities along both temporal and spatial dimensions. These comparisons can be made at various levels, from single assemblages of two or more exemplars to diverse assemblages documented across vast distances during the same or different time horizons.

As a general practice, we can compare glyptic across cultural horizons when we are confident that the same general functional parameters obtained cross-culturally. By “function” I mean that glyptic art was used for administrative purposes as well as for others. Comparisons are made by measuring the degrees to which seal morphology, imagery, style, and other factors are shared or unique within and between regions. These comparisons allow us to confirm or refine relative chronology of archaeological deposits defined through ceramic analysis and establish the presence and extent of shared ideology, technology, and administrative praxis.

For the purposes of defining changing regional character and describing intraregional relations, I will employ three discrete measures of similarity in seal imagery. The closest degree of similarity reflects systemic or “cultural” identity. In this category, literal identity is not the point. Rather this highest degree of similarity exists when features of seal designs are judged to belong to the same semiotic system employed by a single cultural tradition. In this category of systemic or cultural identity, there must be technological, morphological, iconographic, and stylistic isomorphism among seal assemblages.

A second degree of relation is one that corresponds generally to the notion of “cultural emulation,” which is frequently invoked in discussions of state formation in Mesopotamia. Cultural emulation suggests that fundamental features of a particular style and/or iconography

are borrowed from one cultural group by another and used in the local production and use of glyptic artifacts. These features can include any combination of stylistic, iconographic, or morphological traits. A few clear examples of cultural emulation within glyptic art are discussed below.

Finally, we can recognize a degree of similarity that corresponds to the shared symbolic domain elaborated upon by Gil Stein (chap. 8). He invokes a "shared ideological system" to infer the existence of communication between independent chiefdom elites. Before Mesopotamian state formation, this shared symbolic system describes the relations between distant regions as reflected in the glyptic art. This rather generic degree of similarity tells us that groups shared basic life ways and perhaps basic beliefs, a mutual awareness of each other, and similar levels of hierarchical or information-processing complexity. Within regional style groups we see a greater or lesser degree of identity among individual seals. Between regions there will be far less sharing.

A final consideration is the assumption concerning the point of origin of any specific item of administrative residue. Only in the case of door sealings, which are rarely encountered in proveniences dating to the fourth millennium B.C., can we be sure that clay administrative documents originated at the site where they were found. In the case of inscribed documents, we assume that they originate where they tell us they were written. In the case of preliterate administrations, however, only physical analyses such as neutron activation will provide independent proof for this important issue of origin (Rothman and Blackman 1990). Particularly when considering instances of shared cultural or systemic identity, we need to know if the artifact has traveled from place of origin to place of deposition. With sealings used to close portable containers, the situation is fraught with even more interpretive problems. One intuitively assumes that a commodity was packaged before it was sealed and was sealed in order to keep it secure while moving. Is that an accurate assumption? How far did the sealings travel? Did they come long distances or from the immediate hinterland of the site where they were found? Indeed, perhaps sealings do not represent any movement at all but were a purely administrative step used to control the internal distribution of goods. Until reliable data from neutron activation analysis are forthcoming, for the purposes of this discussion I assume that

clay sealings were meaningful within the community where they were found and that therefore they can, as a general rule, be used to describe regional character.<sup>1</sup> This guideline is obviated when specific evidence is unique within a given glyptic assemblage. Then one should try to determine possible origin of the clay mass or of the seal with which it is impressed through comparisons to material from other regions.

### OVERVIEW OF THE SUBREGIONS

Seven contiguous subregions have been recognized for the era of state formation in Mesopotamia: southern Mesopotamia, Khuzistan, the Western Zagros, Upper Tigris, Iraqi and Syrian Jazira, middle Upper Euphrates, and Upper Euphrates (see fig. 1.1). While ecologically distinct, all of them are interconnected either overland or along the Tigris River or rivers of the Khabur drainage basin. Direct communication along the Euphrates River was not extensive until the early third millennium B.C.

Based on site size and density, the southern Mesopotamian alluvium is the location of greatest social complexity during the era of state formation. From the perspective of seal use and information processing technologies, this is certainly true by the end of the period; it is less evident from the accumulating evidence for the beginning of the era. Notwithstanding recent survey and excavation data on changing settlement size, and the refinement and extension of the ceramic sequence from Nippur, Uruk-Warka is still the only site that has produced a coherent body of glyptic art in anything approaching a stratified context. Even at Uruk-Warka, the tertiary nature of the deposits limits us to *terminus ante quem* relative dates for most of the glyptic evidence (Nissen 1986a, this volume). Telloh, ancient Girsu (Genouillac 1934–36), also produced a significant body of glyptic art. Its archaeological context is also problematic, not because of the deposition but because of the methods of retrieval.

Sites in the eastern extension of the southern alluvium, the archaeologically productive region of Khuzistan, never attained the size of those in southern Mesopotamia during the fourth millennium (Johnson 1987a). In fact, there is evidence for a radical decrease in sedentary occupation of the plain at the end of the Uruk period

(Johnson 1973). This change in settlement patterns appears to coincide with a profound change in the nature of the glyptic art. However, measured solely in terms of administrative evidence, the complexity of these communities during the Early and Middle Uruk periods (LC 2-4) would seem to be closely comparable to that known at Uruk-Warka. Only in the Late Uruk period (LC 5) do they diverge. Mesopotamian administrative practices become far more complex with the appearance of proto-writing. In Khuzistan, the important sites for our knowledge of glyptic art and administration include Sharafabad (Wright, Miller, and Redding 1980), Susa (Amiet 1972, 1980; Le Brun 1971; Le Brun and Vallat 1978), and Chogha Mish (Delougaz and Kantor 1996). All chronological phases considered in this review of glyptic evidence are documented in Khuzistan, but not at all sites. The radical reorganization that marks the beginning of the Late Uruk (LC 5) phase in Khuzistan may reflect competition between Susa and Chogha Mish. Whatever its cause, the latter site was abandoned at the beginning of the Late Uruk phase. Susa suffers some kind of retrenchment by the end of the phase.

Although incompletely known, the Western Zagros region seems to have had a thriving tradition of glyptic art during the Late Ubaid/Early Uruk (Ubaid, LC 1, LC 2) phases and continuing into the early third millennium (Amiet 1980; Rashad 1990). Unlike other sub-regions drawn into the process of state formation, the Western Zagros, for the most part, continued to use stamp seals throughout the entire millennium, only rarely adopting the cylinder seal for administration until the middle of the third millennium. This makes establishing chronological relations through glyptic comparisons difficult because iconographic and stylistic features continue in use much longer in the Western Zagros than in other regions. An important exception to this tendency is Godin Tepe, where an "implantation" of a community of people from Khuzistan or the Diyala occurs at the beginning of the Late Uruk period. Among the strongly southern artifact assemblage are cylinder seals and numerical tablets closely comparable to those from Susa (Weiss and Young 1975).

The fourth zone is the Upper Tigris piedmont. The glyptic traditions for various stages of the era of state formation are well documented at Gawra (Rothman n.d.), Nineveh, and Arpachiyah (von

Wickede 1990). This subregion has produced abundant evidence for the early and extensive use of stamp seals, which developed early in the Ubaid period and continued through the Early Uruk phase (LC 2). However, apart from the important evidence from Nineveh for administrative identity with southern administrative systems, the glyptic art from the Upper Tigris subregion has a distinct regional character. Until recently, our understanding of the distinct character of the region has been affected by our incorrect interpretation of relative chronology, which placed Gawra VIII in the Late Uruk phase. The ceramic chronology proposed in this volume now places the occupation of level VIII of Gawra at the beginning of the expansion of the southern presence into the north in the early Middle Uruk/LC 3 phase. In the Upper Tigris, only at Nineveh do we have evidence thus far for administrative and glyptic materials identical to those used in the late Middle and Late Uruk (LC 4–5) contexts in the south (Collon and Reade 1983).

The fifth zone is the Syrian and Iraqi Jazira, the steppelike land that supports rainfall agriculture and lies between the Euphrates and the Tigris. This subregion is watered and drained by the Khabur and Balikh river systems. From an early period, Tell Brak, strategically located halfway across the plain on the Jaghjagh River, was a prominent settlement in the region. Recent excavations at Brak are enabling us to make greater sense of the role played by the site in this period. It has become increasingly clear that Brak is crucial to an understanding of the relations between the east and west as well as north and south during the era of state formation. Although evidence has been available since Mallowan's excavations in the 1930s, only now are we beginning to grasp the importance of this site as a vibrant point of intraregional mediation during the Middle Uruk period (LC 3–4). Other sites in the Jazira will undoubtedly show similar features. Most recently Hamoukar to the east of Brak has produced abundant finds of the period (*New York Times*, May 23, 2000).

Along the Euphrates, three points of interaction in the state formation process have been identified. As Gil Stein has observed for the ceramics, the glyptic evidence found along the Euphrates seems to reflect a direct correlation between distance and the level of interaction between north and south (Stein 1998). Qraya (Simpson 1988), at

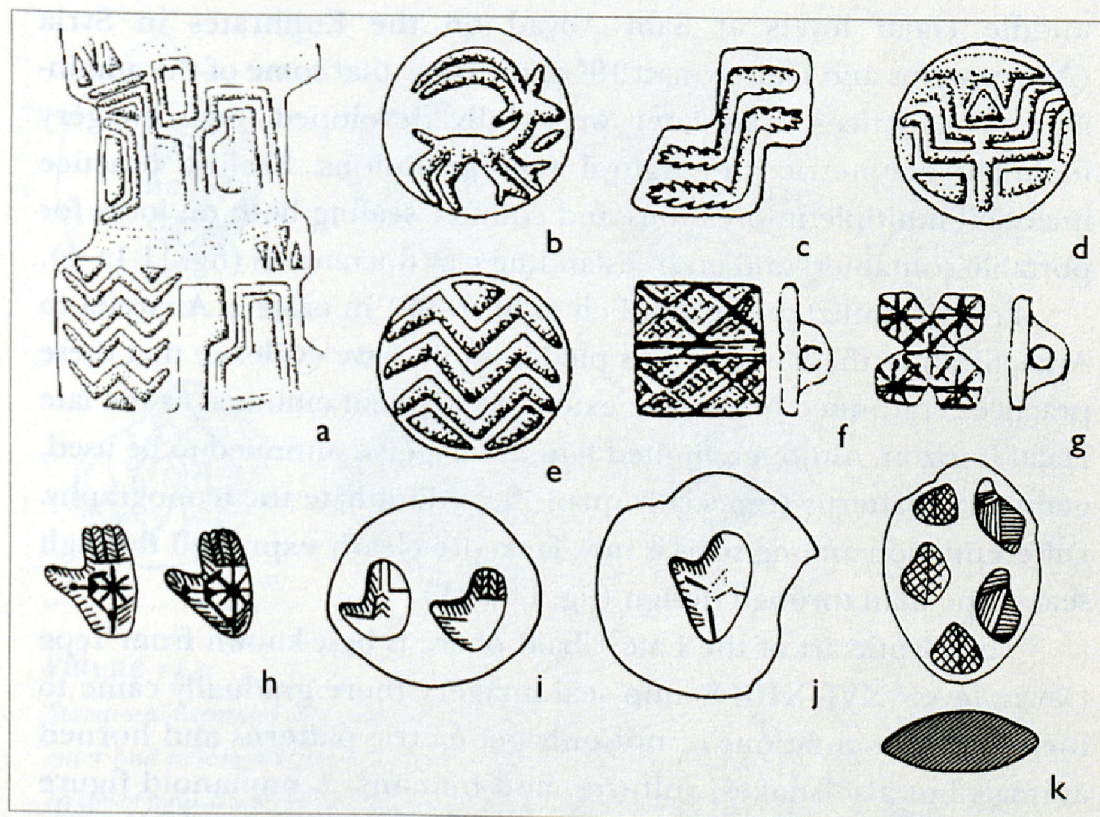
the confluence of the Khabur and the Euphrates, is the southernmost site that has yielded Middle Uruk seal-impressed administrative materials (LC 3–4).<sup>2</sup> The glyptic from the important cluster of sites some 250 kilometers to the north and also on the Euphrates River—Sheikh Hassan, Habuba Kabira, and Jebel Aruda—also provides the evidence for close, direct, and sustained contact with sites in the south. This begins in the early Middle Uruk period (LC 3) and continues through the Late Uruk (LC 5). Administrative materials and glyptic art from these sites are either identical to material known from the south or emulate it in form, iconography, and style. Further upriver at Hacinebi, the contact between the southern sites is limited to the early Middle Uruk period (LC 3) in ceramic terms. In addition, all three categories of glyptic evidence were found at Hacinebi: administrative material identical to that found in the south; glyptic art made locally and emulating morphological, stylistic, and iconographic features of southern glyptic; and material unrelated to the southern traditions and closely related to regional styles found in the Jazira and in eastern Anatolia. Even further upriver, at Hasek Höyük, it is difficult to judge if any of the glyptic evidence is identical to that from the south or whether it is all emulative. Finally, at Arslantepe, west of the Euphrates, no evidence that is culturally identical to southern glyptic has been found, although there is abundant evidence for emulation together with masses of Anatolian regional glyptic material that bears no relationship whatsoever to southern practice.

### A REGIONAL SURVEY OF THE GLYPTIC EVIDENCE

In the absence of datable inscriptions, ceramics have long served as the backbone of Greater Mesopotamian relative chronology, while radiocarbon sequences give the range of absolute dates. In this analysis, glyptic art and administrative materials are fit into ceramically defined sequences as reflected in table 1.1. Dates are therefore assigned independently of changes (or continuities) in glyptic art. Our understanding of the sequence of development and interregional relations reflected in the glyptic and administrative materials is thus based on temporal relations established through external criteria.

The present survey covers a much longer period of time than the one on which this volume focuses. As Nissen argues in this volume, the





**FIGURE 11.1**

*Seal designs of the Halaf period. (a–c) Impressions on ancient clay sealings from Sabi Abyad, level 6, Early Halaf period. Both geometric and figural imagery is recorded from the site. Shapes include both circular and right-angled straight-sided geometric forms. (f–g) Stamp seal impressions on clay sealings from Domuztepe, eastern Anatolia, Late Halaf period. (h–k) Impression on clay sealings in the shape of a right hand; disk-shaped clay sealings from Arpachiyah impressed by a stamp seal in the shape of a right hand; multiple impressions of a crescent-shaped stamp, and a triangular stamp, Late Halaf period. Not to scale. Sources: a–e, Duistermaat 1996:figs. 5.3–5.5; f–g, Campbell et al. 1999:fig. 14; h–k, von Wickede 1990:57, 58, 60b, 59.*

processes of development, interaction, and change began much earlier than the fourth millennium. To see the full picture a brief discussion of the earliest material is necessary.

### **Halaf and Ubaid**

By the beginning of the era of state formation, glyptic art had been in use for millennia in Greater Mesopotamia (Porada et al. 1992; Rashad 1990; von Wickede 1990). The typical seal form was the stamp, whose shape as well as engraved imagery carried meaning. By the

middle Halaf levels at Sabi Abyad on the Euphrates in Syria (Akkermanns and Duistermatt 1996) we know that some of the administrative practices used later were fully developed. Seal imagery included geometric and figural representations. Sealing practice included multiple impressions and counter sealing both on locks for portable containers and on freestanding clay documents (fig. 11.1a–e).

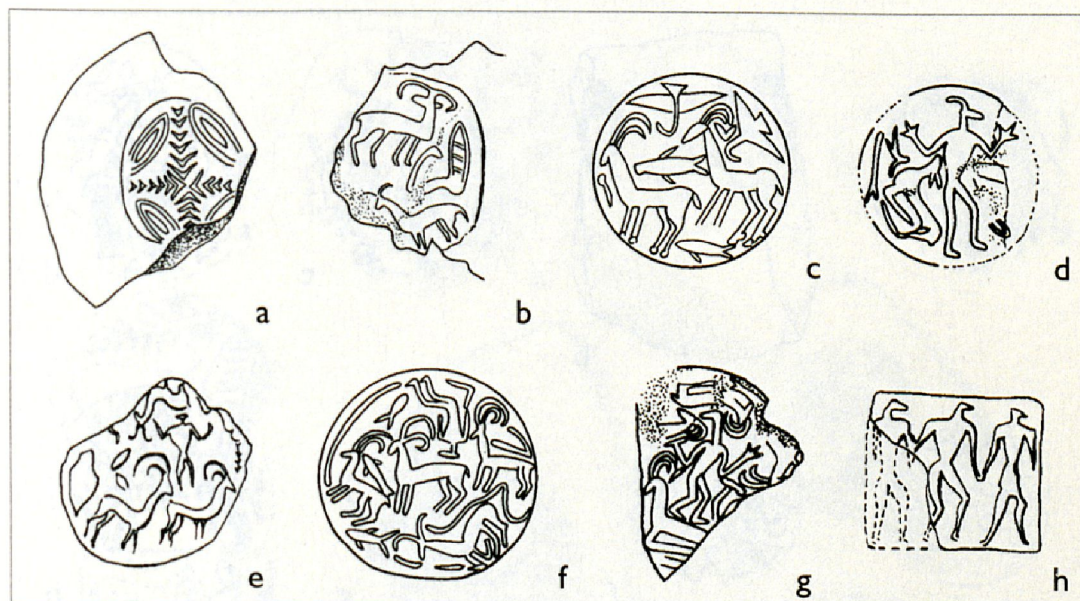
From Domuztepe (Campbell et al. 1999) in eastern Anatolia to Arpachiyah in the Upper Tigris piedmont we have evidence that these practices continued across the extensive regional embrace of the late Halaf horizon. Although limited figural imagery continued to be used, geometric patterns (especially quadrilles) dominate the iconography. Differentiation among seals is now far more clearly expressed through seal shape than through design (fig. 11.1f–k).

The glyptic art of the Late Ubaid phase is best known from Tepe Gawra levels XVI–XIII. Stamp seal imagery there gradually came to include representations of not only geometric patterns and horned animals but also snakes, vultures, and humans. A humanoid figure with the head of an animal appears (fig. 11.2). Although the precise identity of this figure is unknown, its depicted demeanor suggests a shaman.<sup>3</sup> To the west, this subject matter is well known at Değirmentepe, in a distinctive regional style (fig. 11.3a–c). This individual continues to figure prominently in the early phase of the Late Chalcolithic period. To date there is only slim evidence for this personage in the glyptic art of this period from the southern alluvium of the Tigris and Euphrates; we have one example from southern Mesopotamia (Oueili) (fig. 11.3d). From Susa, however, this figure may be documented as early as level 27 in the Acropole sounding (fig. 11.3e).

### **Terminal Ubaid/LC 1**

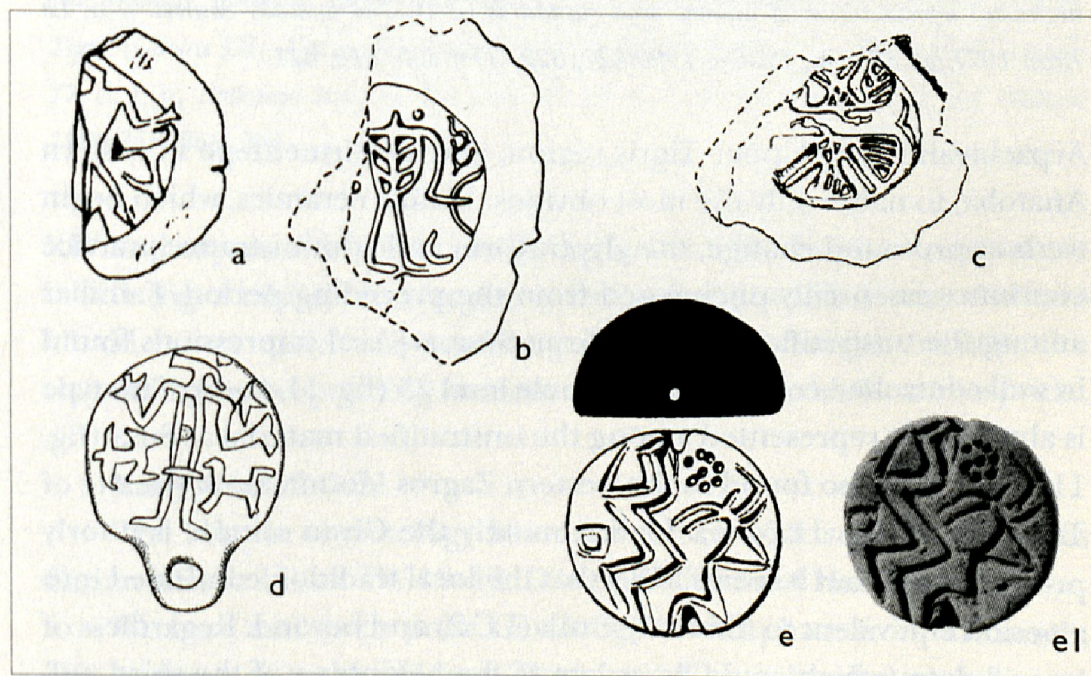
The relative chronology based on ceramic sequences equates Eanna XVI–XIV, Susa Acropole levels 27–23, and Gawra XII and XIA/B and the Gawra A phase at Nineveh.

In the meager material that we have from the site of Uruk-Warka there is no suggestion of a flourishing glyptic tradition in southern Mesopotamia, although further excavation is needed to confirm this impression. This stands in stark contrast to the vigorous glyptic traditions known from Susiana, Giyan in the Zagros, Gawra, Nineveh, and



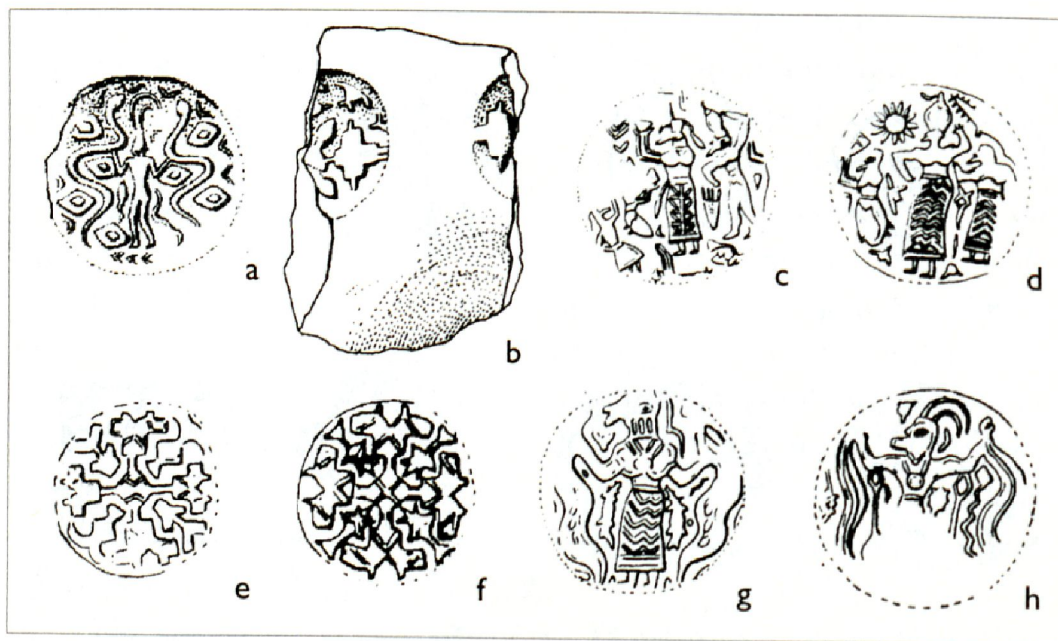
**FIGURE 11.2**

Stamp-seal-impressed clay sealings from Tepe Gawra, Late Ubaid levels XIV–XIII. Both circular and rectangular stamps occur. While geometric imagery continues, there is an increase in use of figural representation. The figural scenes are complex and are composed along a horizontal axis or a circular rotation. Not to scale. Sources: a–d, f–g, von Wickede 1990:244, 249, 245b, 250b, 248, 252a; e, h, Amiet 1980:36, 49.



**FIGURE 11.3**

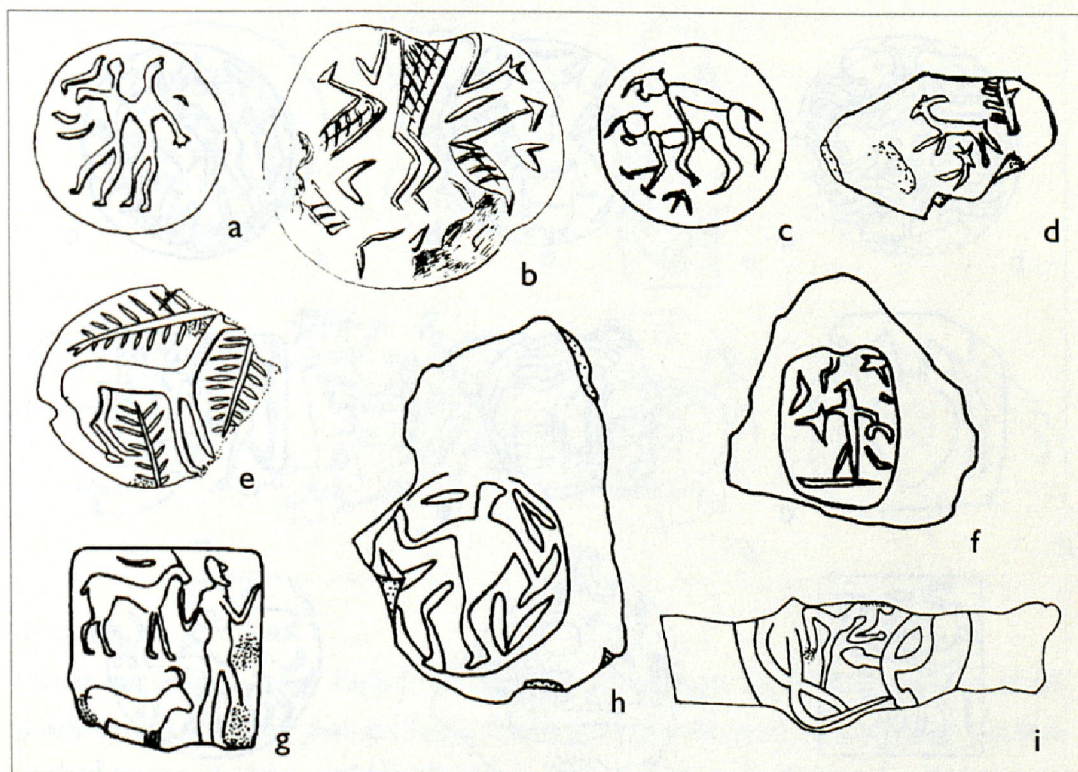
Late Ubaid stamp seal designs impressed on clay sealings: human, vultures, “shaman” figures. (a–c) Eastern Anatolia (Değirmentepe, Late Ubaid). (d) Stone pendant with incised image of horned “shaman” from southern Mesopotamia (Oueili, Late Ubaid). (e) Drawing and photo of seal from Susa, Acropole level 27. Not to scale. Sources: a, drawing after von Wickede 1990:358; b–d, von Wickede 1990:363, 348, 227; e–e1, Le Brun 1971:fig. 35, pl. 22.



**FIGURE 11.4**

*Stamp seal impressions on clay sealings from Susa. (a–b) Acropole level 25. (c–h) Unstratified material. Dominant themes in the stamp seals from Susa at this period are the “shaman” figure, now wearing a long skirt with distinct patterning as well as an animal headdress, engaged in a significant (i.e., “ritual”) activity. Another common theme is the abstracted representation of animal head standards (e–f). Not to scale. Sources: a–b, Le Brun 1971:fig. 35; c–h, Rashad 1990:821, 822, 804, 805, 810, 811.*

Arpachiyah in the Upper Tigris region, and Değirmentepe in eastern Anatolia, to name only the most obvious. Unlike ceramics, which begin to show profound change, the glyptic form and administrative practice continues essentially unchanged from the preceding period. Familiar among the unstratified material from Susa are seal impressions found in well-controlled contexts in Acropole level 25 (fig. 11.4a–b). This type is abundantly represented among the unstratified material at Susa (fig. 11.4c–h). It is also found in the western Zagros Mountains at the site of Tepe Giyan (fig. 11.5a–c). Unfortunately the Giyan sample is poorly provenienced, but it seems likely that the local tradition continued into a period equivalent to the Early Uruk (LC 2) and beyond. Regardless of its end date (which could be as late as the beginning of the third millennium), the Western Zagros material represents the unbroken continuation of the Late Ubaid figural tradition. Gawra provides the best-controlled sample of this glyptic type. Appearing first in Gawra



**FIGURE 11.5**

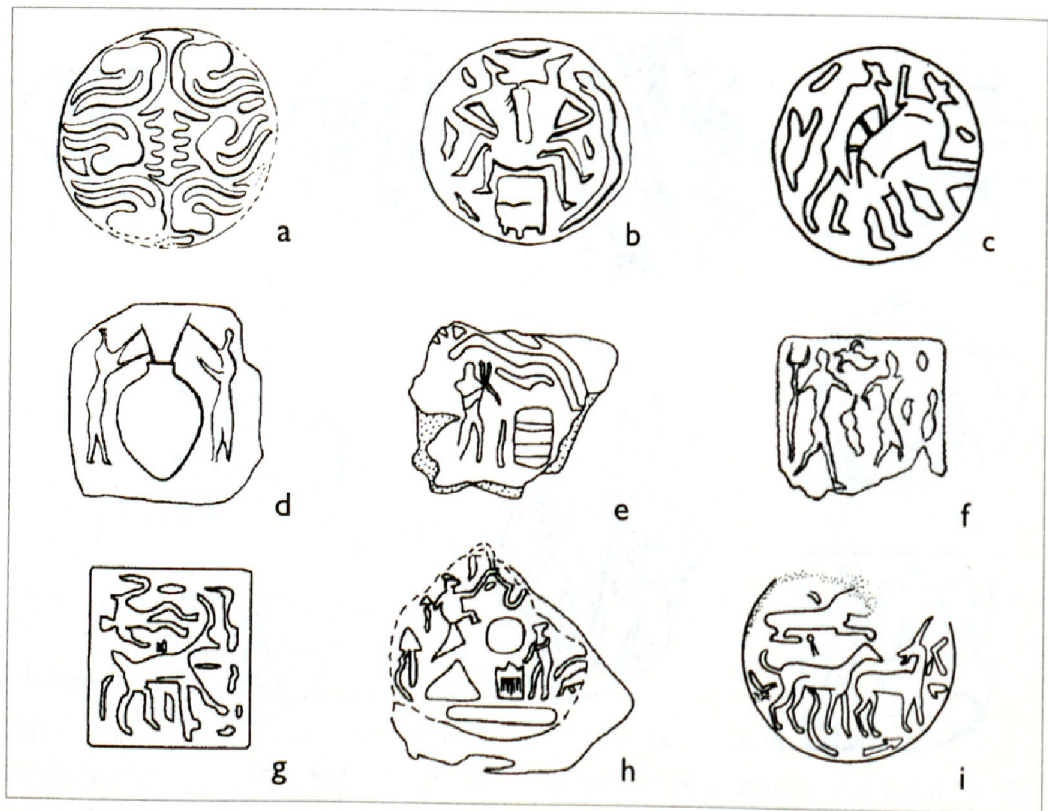
Stamp seal imagery from the Early Uruk/LC 2 phase. Dominant imagery includes humans and animals, shamans, and horned animals. (a–c) Western Zagros (Giyān). (d–i) Upper Tigris (Gawra XII). Not to scale. Sources: a–b, Amiet 1980:88, 84; c, Rashad 1990:fig. 3, 77; d, f, h, Rothman *n.d.*: pl. 25, 465, pl. 24, 433, pl. 28, 472; e, g, i, von Wickede 1990:259, 268, 261.

XIV and represented most clearly in Gawra XIII, the type is abundant in XII (fig. 11.5d–i). Its imagery is somewhat expanded from the Late Ubaid but is essentially unchanged. Common images include the shaman figure, copulating humans, humans and animals, and caprids.

### Early Uruk/LC 2

The relative chronology based on the ceramic sequence equates Eanna XII, Tell Brak TW 19–18, Gawra XI/XA, and Hacinebi A.

We have extremely poor knowledge of this phase from the south, but evidence from the Upper Tigris and Upper Euphrates indicates that the stamp seal traditions begun in the earlier Ubaid phase continued to develop. The most noticeable trend is the introduction of a number of new scenes, especially apparent at Gawra.



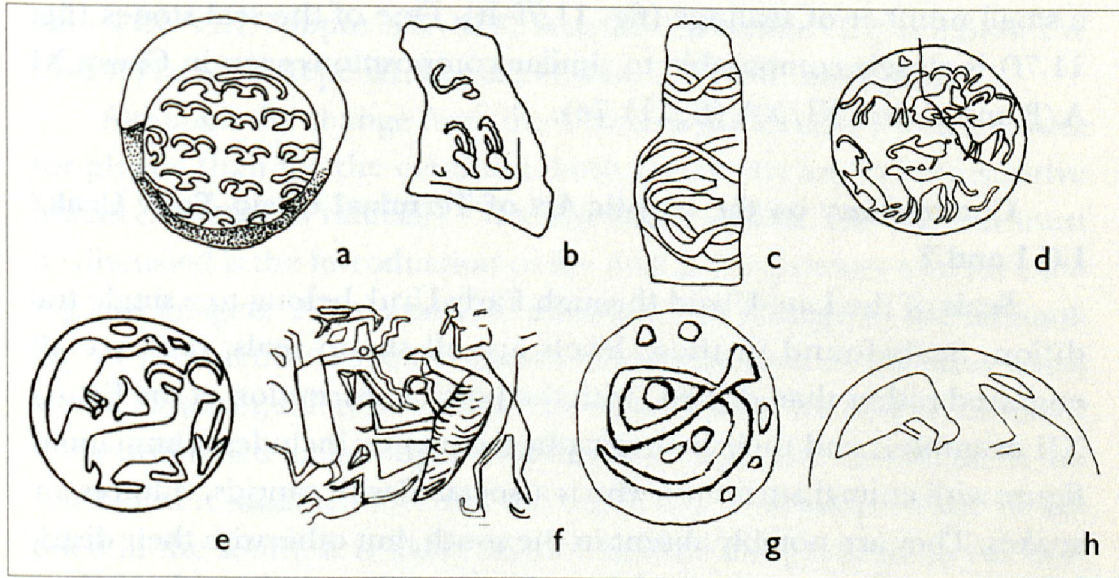
**FIGURE 11.6**

*Stamp seal imagery from the Early Uruk/LC 2 phase, Upper Tigris. Dominant imagery includes groups of humans engaged in complex activities of drinking, farming, and ritual. Also seen are caprid heads, intertwined snakes, and a horned animal with a vulture. Not to scale. (a) Uruk-Warka Eanna deep sounding, level XII. (b–d) Gawra XII–XIA. (e–i) Gawra XI/XA. Sources: a, g, i, von Wickede 1990:482, 284, 278; b, d, f, Amiet 1980:41, 43, 45; c, e, h, Rothman n.d.:pl. 37, 1077, pl. 40, 1005, pl.36,1061.*

The earliest stratified glyptic from Uruk, from the deep sounding in Eanna level XII (fig. 11.6a), is a single stamp seal impression with six heads of horned caprids arrayed on either side of a central vertical form. This composition of animal heads is comparable to seals from Susa (fig. 11.4b, e, f). This seal imagery may have been created by a drill rather than by a gouging tool. The use of the drill, as we will see below, marks the transition from the late Ubaid tradition to the Uruk tradition in seal production in the south.

The absence of stratified material among the finds from Susa makes it difficult to identify trends. The ceramic evidence suggests the possibility of a hiatus in the occupation of the site.

In the Upper Tigris, abundant glyptic evidence from Gawra level



**FIGURE 11.7**

*Stamp seal imagery. (a–e) Early Uruk/LC 2 phase from Upper Tigris, Gawra XI/XA. (f–h) Early Uruk/LC 2 phase from the Upper Euphrates, Hacinebi phase A. The imagery of both regions presents the “shaman” figure, the vulture, the caprid, and twisted snakes. Not to scale. Sources: a–b, d–e, von Wickede 1990:279, 291, 286, 296; c, Rothman n.d.:pl. 49, 1844; f–h, author.*

XIA/B documents certain trends. Most important, the repertoire of human figures expands from the single shamanic figure to extended groups of figures engaged in a variety of activities (fig. 11.6b–h). These activities include mating, communal drinking (suggested by groups in association with a large vessel and straws), and subsistence (groups with or without tools in association with animals). The stamp seals with animal representations have a horizontal orientation (figs. 11.6i and 11.7a–b, d–e), unlike those of earlier levels, which were arrayed around the seal surface. Free-floating heads of horned animals are represented for the first time (fig. 11.7a–b). Copulating snakes continue to be depicted (fig. 11.6c). In addition, in a composition almost identical to one from Hacinebi A, a vulture hovers over the back of a caprid (fig. 11.7f). To date no stratified examples have been reported from Tell Brak; however, examples have been found on the surface.

At the crossing of the Upper Euphrates into Anatolia, in contexts dated to this phase on the basis of ceramics, Hacinebi A levels have produced a comparatively large number of actual seal stones in addition to

a small number of sealings (fig. 11.7f–h). One of the seal stones (fig. 11.7f) is closely comparable to similar compositions seen in Gawra XI A/B and Gawra XI/XA (fig. 11.7e).

### **Commentary on the Glyptic Art of Terminal Ubaid–Early Uruk/ LC 1 and 2**

Seals of the Late Ubaid through Early Uruk belong to a single tradition. Seals found in these levels are all stamp seals; they are all engraved rather than drilled (with the possible exception of the Eanna XII example); and their iconography frequently includes a humanoid figure with animal attributes, who is associated with caprids, vultures, or snakes. They are notably absent in the south, but otherwise their distribution extends through all of the subregions that are later drawn into the process of state formation in the south (including Khuzistan), the Upper Tigris, and the Upper Euphrates. Although there is a high degree of similarity in the iconography of these subregions, regional styles of carving are evident. There is no strong evidence for either exchange of actual seals or close contact between the seal carvers. This is to say that neither cultural identity nor conscious emulation underlies the features shared across the region. Rather, as displayed in the pottery of the late Ubaid phase, we continue to see in the glyptic traditions the use of a “shared symbolic ideology.” Their common technology, morphology, and general iconography indicate that they belong within the same cultural horizon. There are, however, obvious differences that distinguish subregions in details of form, carving, and imagery. Thus, while they reflect general cultural familiarity, their differences do not allow us to see them as closely chronologically synchronous or as evidence of direct contact between distant places. What they tell us is that communities shared general administrative as well as production technology and that they shared social institutions that were symbolized in similar ways. They do not tell us that these sites were in direct and continuous administrative contact with each other. Certainly, this general level of similarity is not evidence for political or economic hegemony of any subregion over any other.

### **Early Middle Uruk/LC 3**

The relative chronology based on the ceramic sequence equates

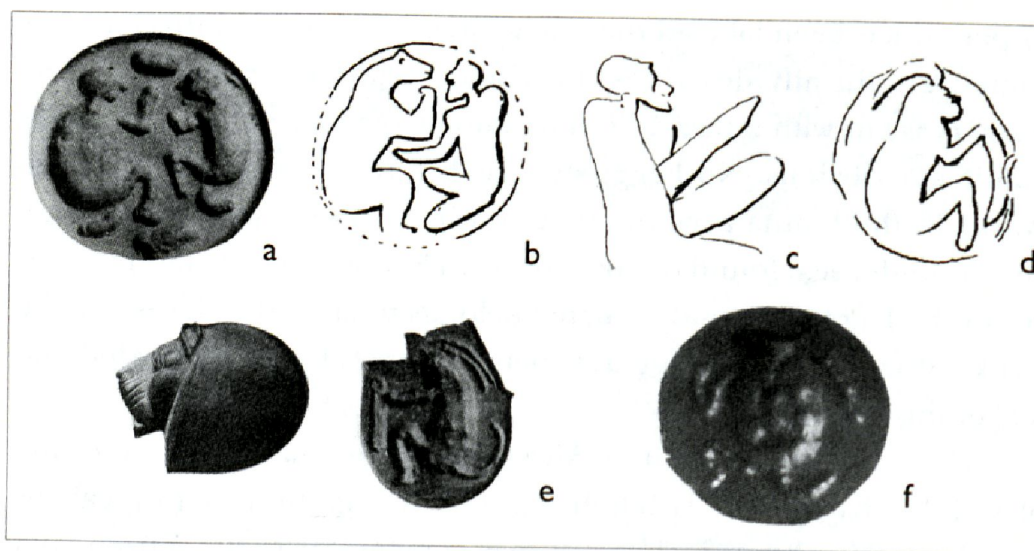


Eanna IX–VIII, Nippur XX–XIX, Susa 22–19, Gawra VIII, Tell Brak TW 17–14, Hacinebi Tepe B1, Sheikh Hassan 13/10–8, and Qraya.

Although the change from the Ubaid to the Uruk horizon is slower for glyptic than for the ceramics, both glyptic art and administrative practice change as radically. One essentially stylistic feature that must be discussed is the introduction of the drill as the primary tool for carving seal imagery. From available evidence, this change in the technology of production appears simultaneously at sites in the north and south. However, it tends to dominate in the south. We cannot yet know if the drill-based technology was introduced and then developed in the south or if it was introduced in the north and then adopted and developed in the south. It is likely that the former will prove to be the case because in the north drilling technology is not typical of regional styles whereas in the south the use of the drill is increasingly well developed. Together with the increased use of the drill for carving, a new form of seal, the cylinder, is introduced. Once introduced, the cylinder seal becomes the glyptic form of choice in southern Mesopotamia, whereas it has a relatively short and highly derivative use in the surrounding regions. From the moment of its introduction the drill is used to cut both stamp seals and cylinder seals.

The simultaneous introduction of drilling technology and the cylinder seal is probably not coincidental because wheel-based technology underlies both. Behind the radical change in ceramics lies the gradual use of slow- and then faster-wheel modes of production. The wheel-based technology of ceramic production may have served as the direct source or at least the primary inspiration for basic changes in lapidary technology. Regardless, there is no question that rotary technology underlies the tools of choice in the cutting of seal stones. A further speculation about causal relations linking these various artifacts is that hollow drill technology was used to produce stone vessels. This technique produced cylindrical stone cores that would have served very effectively as blanks for cylinder seals. Thus, the cylinder seal as object may have originated as the residue produced from coring stone blocks with a hollow drill to produce stone vessels.

Although the data are meager and poorly controlled, a fragmentary chain of evidence suggests that we should seek the origins of this change—a change that undoubtedly reflected profound reorganization



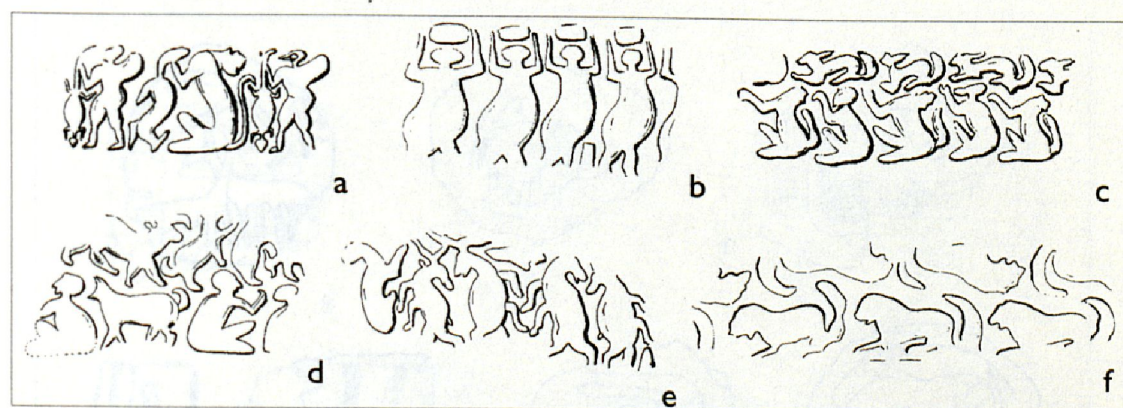
**FIGURE 11.9**

*Imagery on stamp seals from Susa, early Middle Uruk/LC 3 phase. The imagery engraved on the bezel of this type of stamp seal frequently shows seated worker figures, either male or female. The drill is used exclusively to execute the imagery in the "baggy" style. Not to scale. Source: Rashad 1990:1047, 1051, 1046, 1045, 1100, 1043.*

At Susa, it is significant that the baggy style was not found in level 18 or 17 of the Acropole sounding, as represented by the materials published to date. The baggy style is, however, abundantly documented among the unstratified material from Susa, where it is found most clearly among the stamp seals (fig. 11.9). In addition, some hollow clay balls from unstratified contexts are impressed by seals of the baggy style (fig. 11.10) that are comparable to the cylinder known from Anu between C and D. Many are counter-impressed with stamp seals. No examples of the baggy style are found on numerical tablets or tags. Although it is difficult to be certain from the drawings, Chogha Mish does seem to have examples of the baggy style seals impressed on hollow clay balls that are counter-impressed by stamp seals.

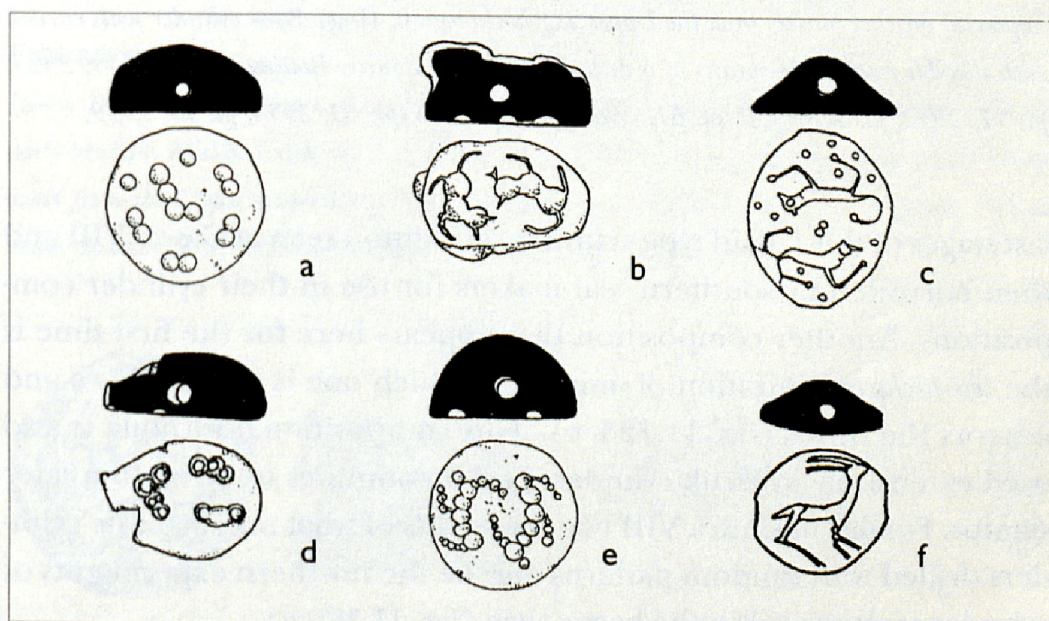
In the Upper Tigris, there is precious little evidence for this early Middle Uruk (LC 3) phase. Yorgan Tepe (the local name of the Nuzi mound) has produced a series of drilled stamp seals in a pit context that apparently produced no ceramics (fig. 11.11). Gawra VIII is dated to the early Middle Uruk period on the basis of ceramics. If this temporal assignment is indeed correct, a new composition was introduced in this period that becomes important in later southern traditions. This

## MESOPOTAMIAN INTRAREGIONAL RELATIONS



**FIGURE 11.10**

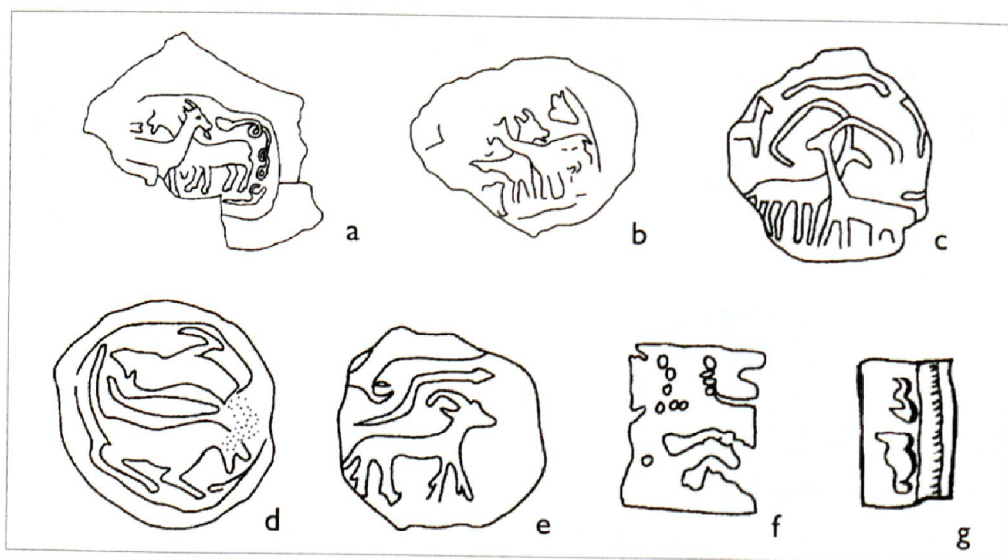
*Imagery of impressions of cylinder seals from Susa on hollow clay balls, sealings, and tags, early Middle Uruk/LC 3 phase. The imagery on this type of cylinder seal shows workers, animals, and felines. The drill is used exclusively to execute the imagery in the “baggy” style. Not to scale. Source: Amiet 1972:567, 678, 565, 570, 465, 553.*



**FIGURE 11.11**

*Imagery engraved on limestone stamp seals found at Yorgan Tepe (the mound of Nuzi) in the Upper Tigris subregion, early Middle Uruk/LC 3 phase. Most of the seals are carved with the drill; c and f are cut, partially, by means of a graver. Not to scale. Source: Starr 1937–39:A1-2, C1-2, G1-2, J1-2, L1-2, F1-2.*

composition is crossed-necked animals (fig. 11.12a–c). The crossing of animal necks is common on seals from Uruk-Warka and Susa in the Late Uruk period. It is likely that this composition was developed in the

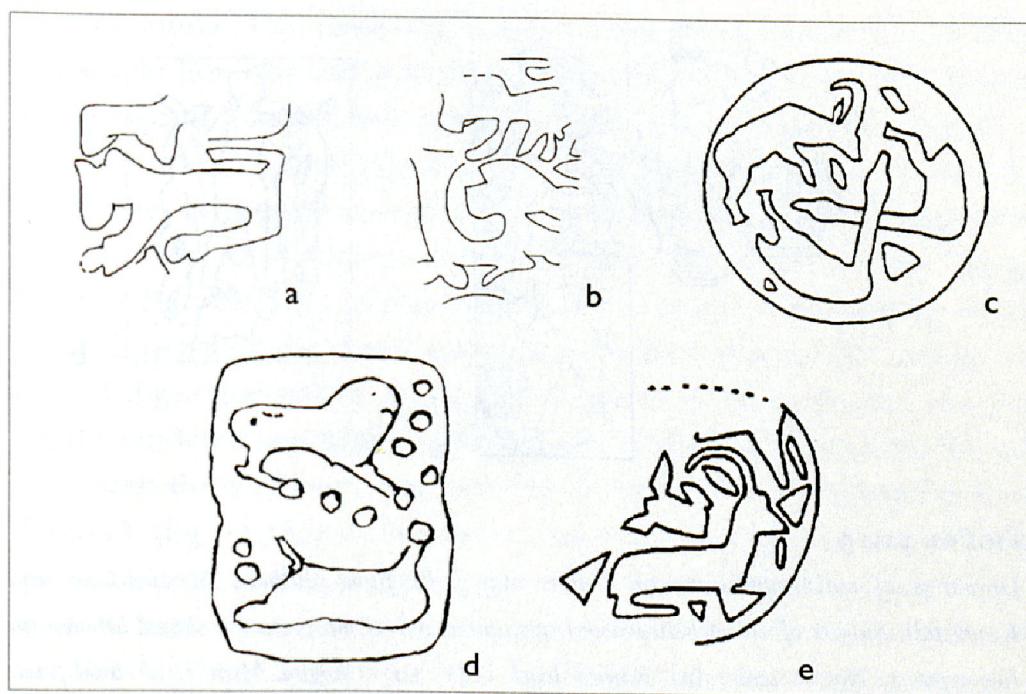


**FIGURE 11.12**

Early Middle Uruk/LC 3 phase, Gawra VIII. (a–e) Drawings of stamp seal imagery impressed on clay masses from the Upper Tigris subregion. (f–g) Bone cylinder seals carved with illegible imagery by means of a drill. Not to scale. Source: Rothman n.d.:pl. 59, 2923, pl. 57, 2952, pl. 58, 2930, pl. 61, 2967, pl. 60, 2966, pl. 63, 2938, pl. 57, 2959.

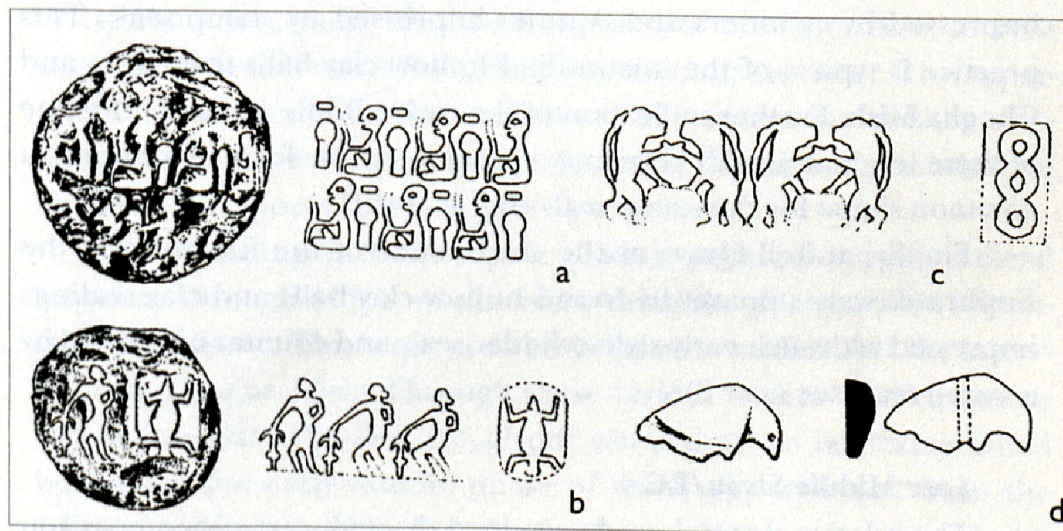
last stages of this Ubaid type stamp seal tradition seen at Gawra VIII and then borrowed by southern seal makers for use in their cylinder compositions. Another composition that appears here for the first time is the *tête beche* organization of animals in which one is placed above and mirrors the other (fig. 11.12d–e). This compositional formula is also used extensively in Uruk cylinders and it continues to be used in later stamps. Finally, in Gawra VIII two fragments of what may be bone cylinders drilled with random patterns may be the northern experiments of cylinder seals carved in the baggy style (fig. 11.12f–g).

Although we have little to date from levels TW 17–14 at Tell Brak in the Jazira, more will be forthcoming. In TW 16 two impressions of what has been called a cylinder seal but is more likely a stamp seal are recorded (fig. 11.13a) along with a stamp seal impression (fig. 11.13b). Hacinebi Tepe level B1 produced a small but interesting collection of glyptic art that displays connections to Gawra VIII, to Brak, and to northern Anatolian glyptic styles (fig. 11.13c, d, e, respectively). It is significant that no baggy style seals have been found in phase B1 of Hacinebi.



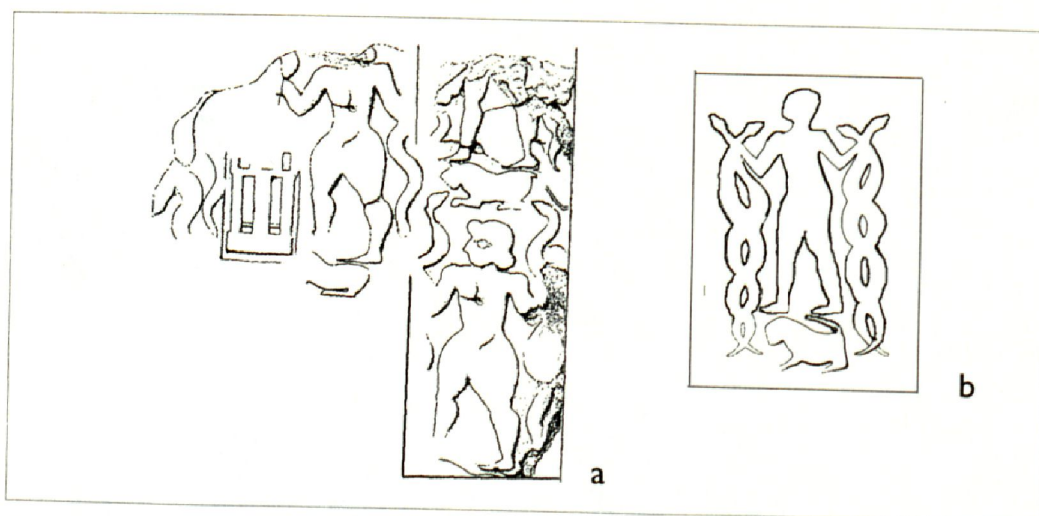
**FIGURE 11.13**

(a-b) Drawings of stamp seal impressions from the Jezira, Tell Brak area TW, level 16 and early level 14, Middle Uruk/LC 3-4 phase. (c-e) Drawings of impressions and actual stamp seals from the Upper Euphrates, Hacinebi phase B1, Middle Uruk/LC 3-4 phase. Not to scale. Sources: a-b, Oates and Oates 1993a:fig. 32; c-e, author.



**FIGURE 11.14**

(a-c) Drawings of impressions of cylinder and stamp seals on hollow clay balls from the Euphrates. (d) Drawing of a vulture pendant seal carved from white limestone, Sheikh Hassan level 10, early Middle Uruk/LC phase 3. Not to scale. Source: Boese 1995:figs. 37, 38, 39, 40.



**FIGURE 11.15**

*Drawings of seal impressions on hollow clay balls from southern Mesopotamia and Khuzistan. Subject of naked hero mastering snake is one of many themes shared between the two regions. Not to scale. (a) Eanna level V-IV. (b) Chogha Mish Uruk levels, late Middle-Late Uruk/LC 4-5. Sources: a, Amiet 1980:1599; b, Delougaz and Kantor 1996:pl. 156.*

Ceramics from Sheikh Hassan level 10 are assigned to the early Middle Uruk phase. The poor-quality illustrations of the three hollow clay balls from that level make them difficult to evaluate. The balls are impressed by cylinders and counter-impressed by stamp seals. This practice is typical of the unstratified hollow clay balls from Susa and Chogha Mish. Further indication of the early Middle Uruk (LC 3) date of these levels at Sheikh Hassan is a pendant in the form of a vulture, a common shape for the stamp seals (fig. 11.14d).

Finally, at Tell Qraya at the confluence of the Khabur and the Euphrates were apparently found hollow clay balls and clay sealings impressed with such early-style cylinder seals and counter-impressed by a stamp seal (see note 2).

#### **Late Middle Uruk/LC 4**

The relative chronology determined through ceramic comparison equates Eanna VII, Nippur XVIII, Sharafabad, Susa early level 18, Brak TW13, and Hacmebi Tepe level B2.

No securely stratified glyptic or administrative material of the late Middle Uruk phase has yet been reported from sites in southern

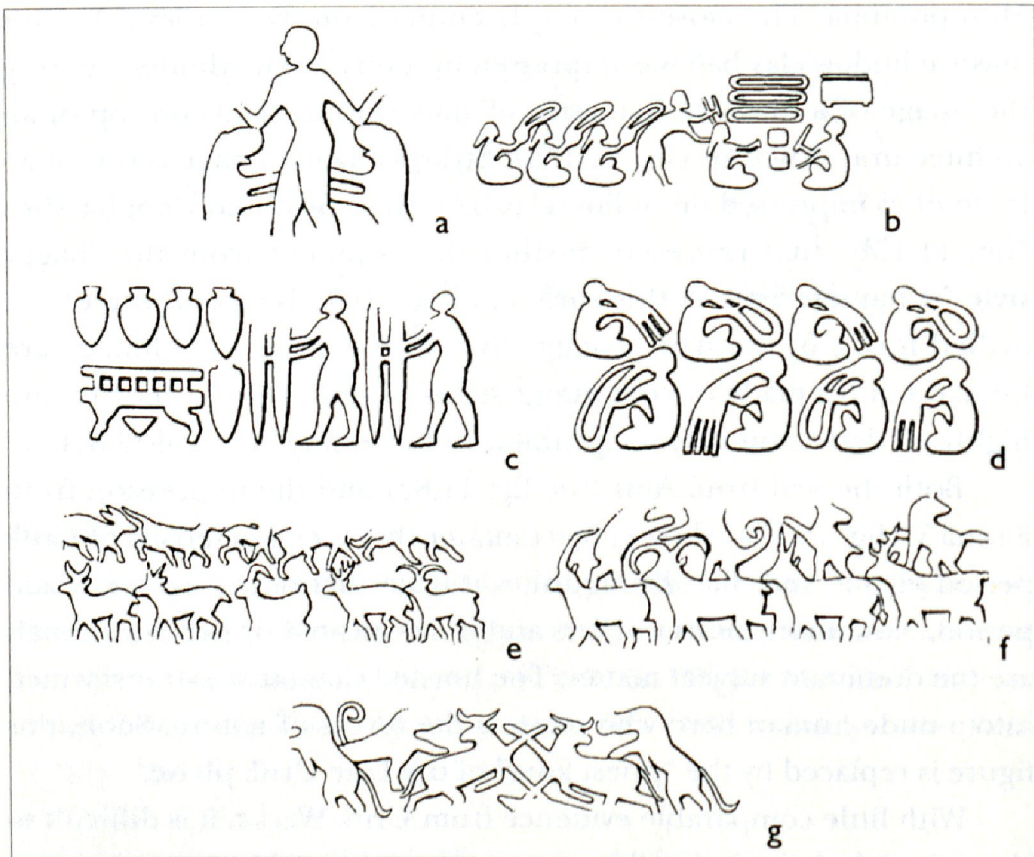
Mesopotamia. The closest example comes from Eanna level V. This massive hollow clay ball was impressed by a very large cylinder carrying the image of a nude male master of snakes who stands on top of an architectural structure (fig. 11.15a). Stylistically the image is very similar to ones impressed on hollow clay balls from Susa and Chogha Mish (fig. 11.15b) that represent further development from the "baggy style." Characteristic of this early modeled style is smoothing of the drilled forms of the true "baggy" style with a graver. No longer are human figures made of contiguous series of drillings. Rather they are highly modeled and fully sculptural with increasing anatomical detail.

Both the seal from Anu (see fig. 11.8c) and the impression from Eanna V (fig. 11.15a) show subject matter that is characteristic of Uruk period glyptic and that distinguishes it from that of the earlier Ubaid period. Now anonymous workers and domesticated or herded animals are the dominant subject matter. The horned shaman was transformed into a nude human hero who masters the forces of nature. Soon, this figure is replaced by the "priest king" of the Late Uruk phase.

With little comparable evidence from Uruk-Warka, it is difficult to characterize the relationship between southern Mesopotamia and Khuzistan. What little data we have suggest that the two subregions underwent a common development. There is no suggestion of political or economic hegemony of one subregion over the other. Also, there is no suggestion that one subregion was emulating the other. The apparently continuous contact between the two subregions explains the commonality that we will probably see when further exploration of southern Mesopotamia is possible.

The sounding in the Acropole at Susa provides us with a skeletal sequence through which we can order the mass of unstratified administrative material. This sequence also helps us to understand the material from Chogha Mish. Through these various bodies of evidence we can define a late Middle Uruk glyptic phase that can be distinguished both from the early middle phase of the baggy style and from the "classic" style seals of the Late Uruk phase, which are associated with the earliest written documents.

The glyptic of Susa Acropole level 18 (fig. 11.16) depicts heroes mastering animals, humans producing goods, animal files (lines of animals) as well as humans engaged with animals, animal combat, humans



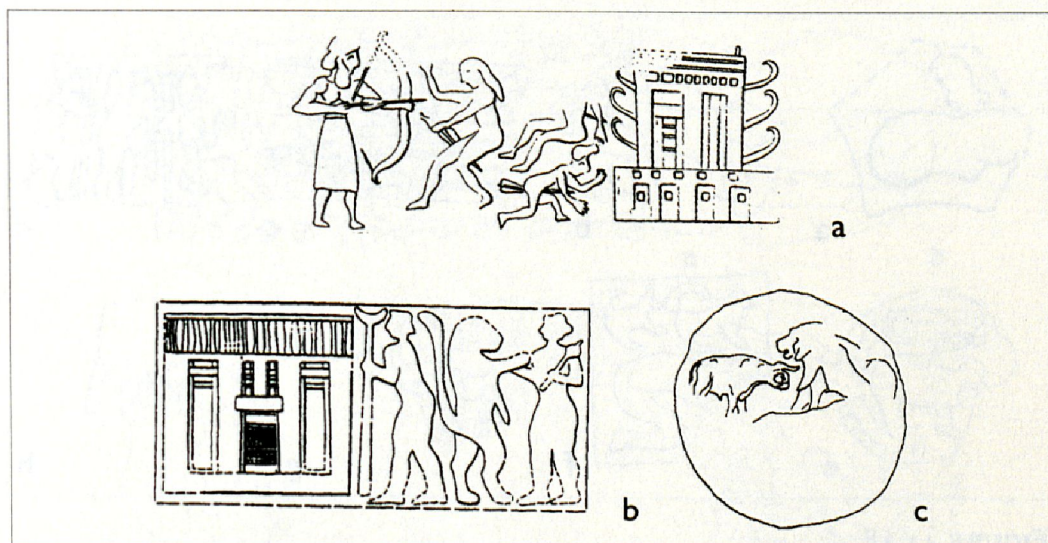
**FIGURE 11.16**

*Drawings of impressions of cylinder seals on clay administrative documents (hollow clay balls, sealings, numerical tablets), Khuzistan, Susa Acropole level 18. Subject matter includes heroic master of animals, worker scenes, animal files, and animal combat scenes. Late Middle Uruk/LC phase 4. Not to scale. Sources: Le Brun and Vallat 1978:figs. 6–7.*

and animals associated with a niched structure, and lists of commodities arranged in double registers. Characteristic of all of these compositions is the tendency to divide the image field into registers (fig. 11.16d), sometimes of changing and unequal heights (fig. 11.16a–c), thereby filling the entire surface with images of varying scales. Another feature typical of this phase is seen in the bodies of animals, which tend to be bulky yet dovetail into each other in a distinctive manner (fig. 11.16e–f).

During this late Middle Uruk (LC 4) period, the figures continue to be made with a drill, but the marks are now smoothed out through the secondary use of a graver. Further, conventions of representation seem to have been resolved for the most important subjects. For exam-





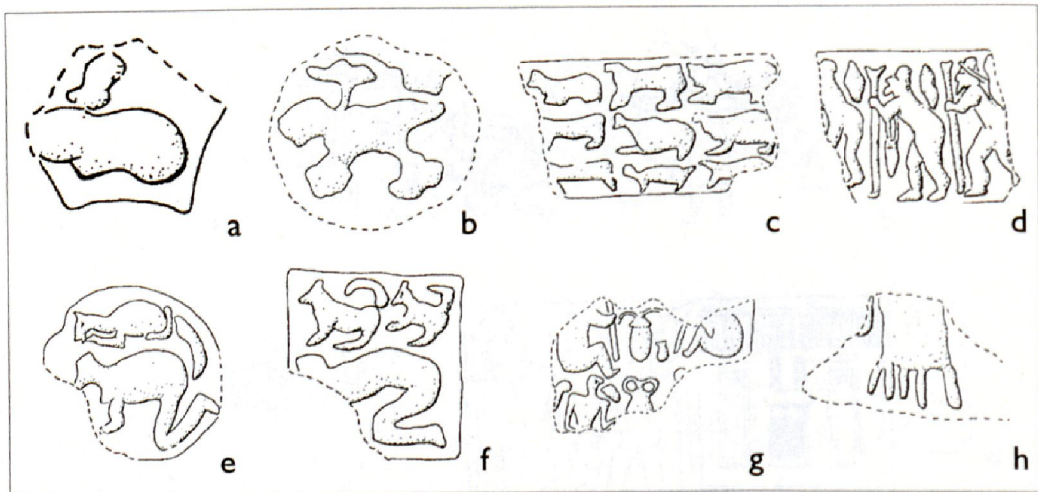
**FIGURE 11.17**

*Drawings of impressions of cylinder seals on clay administrative documents. Late Uruk/LC phase 5. (a–b) Khuzistan (Susa old excavations; Chogha Mish, Uruk phase). (c) Upper Tigris (Nineveh deep sounding). Not to scale. Sources: a, c, Amiet 1980:659, 1679; b, Delougaz and Kantor 1996:pl. 154.*

ple, the worker figure's posture is now fixed with one leg up and one under the body (fig. 11.16, d). At this stage in the Uruk period the widest iconographic range is seen in the glyptic art.

At Susa and Chogha Mish, where the types are most extensively represented, the human figures, nude and bald or dressed and wearing a long pigtail, are distinguished by their actions and their attributes. One recognizable headgear, the hair roll and heavy band associated with the paramount ruler of Uruk, is seen, but rarely, on seals found in Khuzistan (fig. 11.17a–b). While internal evidence cannot identify this figure, the consensus interpretation is that he represents a generic leader rather than a single centralized institution of power.

Although there are differences in the seal repertoire at Chogha Mish and Susa, the similarity of the glyptic imagery and the entire administrative assemblage from the two sites is remarkably close. What such similarity implies for the political or economic relationship between Susa and Chogha Mish is still a matter for speculation; there is no question that they shared details of the symbolic technology used in the administrative toolkit. It is important to emphasize the closeness of the two samples because it is extended when we compare the symbolic



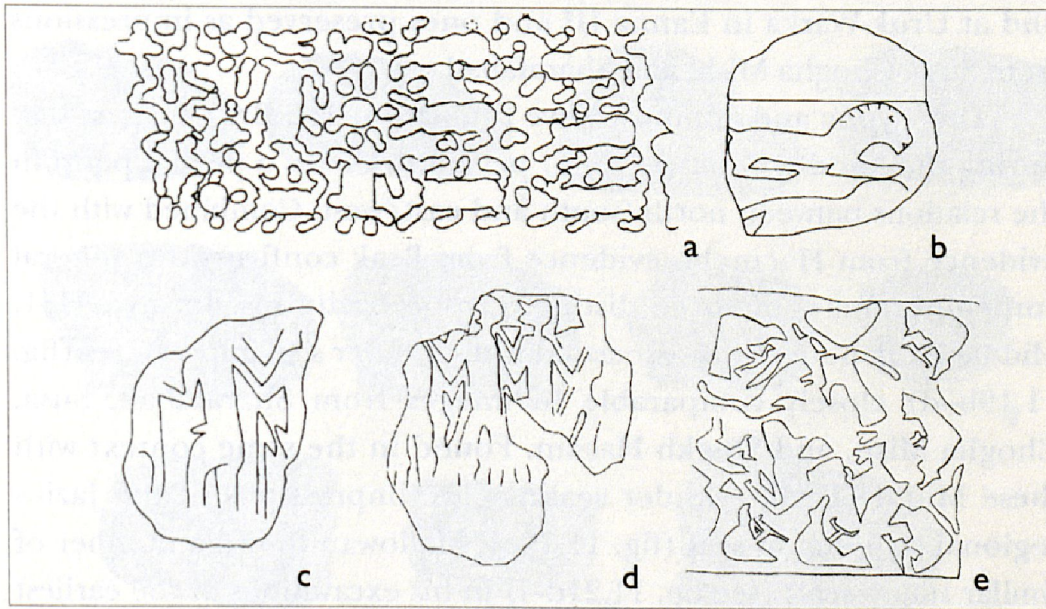
**FIGURE 11.18**

*Imagery of impressions of cylinder and stamp seals found in a seasonal pit at Sharafabad, Khuzistan, early Middle Uruk/LC 3 phase. All imagery is rendered in the "baggy" style by use of the drill. Not to scale. Source: Wright, Miller, and Redding 1980:fig. 6.*

technologies of the sites on the Euphrates with Tell Brak, and especially Hacinebi level B2.

To the degree that we have comparable material from the late Middle Uruk (LC 4) phase from Uruk-Warka, we find the same themes. What we cannot do is compare the imagery from Susa 18 and Chogha Mish with images found in Uruk-Warka Eanna levels IVa and III (Late Uruk/LC 5 and later). The subject matter of the two groups is strikingly different. But until we have more glyptic evidence from Uruk that is securely dated to the late Middle Uruk (LC 4) phase we cannot confidently conclude that the two regions did not share iconographic as well as stylistic and morphological features during this phase. It is during the Late Uruk phase that they diverge.

The site of Sharafabad in Khuzistan provides the well-controlled examples of the material culture of the late Middle Uruk (LC 4) phase. In a seasonal pit we see the continued use of the baggy style, which is not present in the contemporary levels at Susa or Chogha Mish (fig. 11.18). If the ceramics from this provenience can really be assigned to that date, then the true baggy style seals continue in use throughout the Middle Uruk period and cannot be limited to the early part of the period. We see the same situation in Tell Brak level 13. At Sharafabad, impressions of both stamps and cylinders carrying baggy-



**FIGURE 11.19**

*Drawings of (a) a cylinder seal image from Brak TW 13, (b–d) impressions of cylinder seals on clay administrative documents, and (e) imagery engraved on a stamp seal from Brak HS1, late Middle Uruk/LC phase 4. Not to scale. Sources: a, Oates and Oates 1993a:fig. 31; b–d, Matthews 1994:fig. 4; e, drawing after Matthews 1994:fig. 7.*

style images of workers and animals were found on clay sealing devices. No hollow clay balls or numerical tablets were found among these administrative devices. However, semicircular clay cups with seal impressions found in the Sharafabad pit are probably a local adaptation of the hollow clay ball technology in what is a small rural enclave whose administrative praxis lags behind that of the larger centers of Susa and Chogha Mish.

During the late Middle Uruk phase in the western Zagros Mountains and in the Upper Tigris, stamp seals of the Late Ubaid/Early Uruk type continue to be used. If our ceramic chronology is correct, Gawra was abandoned by this time. A seal-impressed jar sealing from Nineveh (fig. 11.17c) can be dated to this phase on the basis of comparison with examples from Susa.

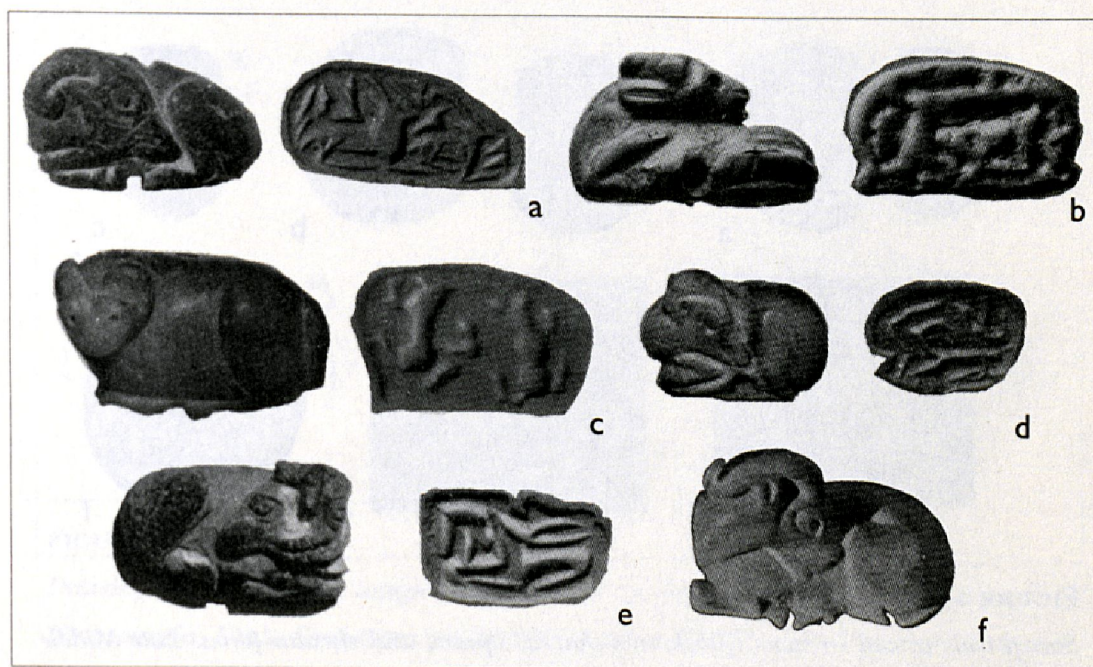
In the Khabur, the late Middle Uruk (LC 4) phase is documented in area TW 13 at Tell Brak. From that level comes a fine example of a baggy-style seal (fig. 11.19a). Apart from the bone cylinders from early Middle Uruk Gawra VIII, this is the first evidence for this stylistic type in the Jezirah. It is closely comparable to examples found at Telloh

and at Uruk-Warka in Eanna III and ones preserved as impressions from Susa, Chogha Mish, and Sharafabad.

The glyptic and administrative finds from Tell Brak suggest that during the Middle Uruk (LC 3–4) period Brak was a pivotal point in the relations between north/south and east/west. Combined with the evidence from Hacinebi, evidence from Brak confirms the general contemporaneity of three distinct glyptic traditions. In area HS1, Middle Uruk pottery was associated with cylinder seal impressions (fig. 11.19b–d) closely comparable to images from Sharafabad, Susa, Chogha Mish, and Sheikh Hassan. Found in the same context with these Middle Uruk cylinder sealings are impressions of the Jazira regional style stamp seal (fig. 11.19e). Mallowan found a number of similar stamp seals (see fig. 11.21d–f) in his excavations of the earliest levels of the Eye Temple together with many theriomorphic stamps. This type was manifest in the early Middle Uruk contexts at Sheikh Hassan (fig. 11.14d). Clearly it continues in use through the Middle Uruk period. By the Late Uruk (LC 5) period, I think that this type was no longer administratively functional and thus fell out of production. If that is the case, then the examples found in later contexts must be considered heirlooms, a likely possibility given their intrinsic charm as objects. They were collected into groups and deposited in later contexts, perhaps as a votive or other meaningful act.

In addition to the types already described, a small number of theriomorphic stamp seals engraved by a drill (fig. 11.20c) were found at Tell Brak, together with numerous theriomorphic stamps that are engraved with a gouging tool (fig. 11.20a, b, d–f). Among these are a number of examples carved in bone, including a recumbent lion, a caprid, and a squatting worker. This version of the theriomorphic stamp seal with engraved rather than drilled imagery rarely occurs in the south. It may represent a northern variation on the drilled theriomorphic or geometric stamp seal type. Perhaps with more evidence we will be able to use these two types as indicators of direct contact between the two regions. This seal type is found in great abundance at Hacinebi Tepe in phase B2 contexts that are spatially distinct but contemporary with late Middle Uruk (LC 4) finds.

There are few late Middle Uruk (LC 4) period contexts from the Upper Euphrates, as determined by the ceramic sequence. However,

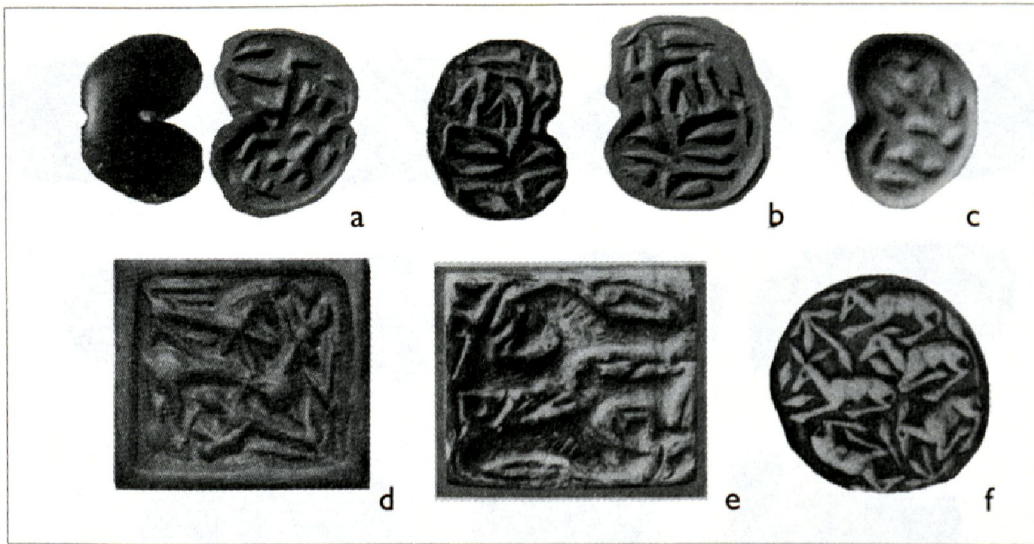


**FIGURE 11.20**

*Theriomorphic stamp seals carved from limestone and from bone from the north, found in the Eye Temple, the lowest level of the gray brick stratum at Tell Brak. All but one (c) is carved by means of a graver. It is possible that the one drilled rather than engraved belongs to the southern rather than the upper Tigridian type of theriomorphic stamp seal. Not to scale. Source: Mallowan 1947:pl. 11–13.*

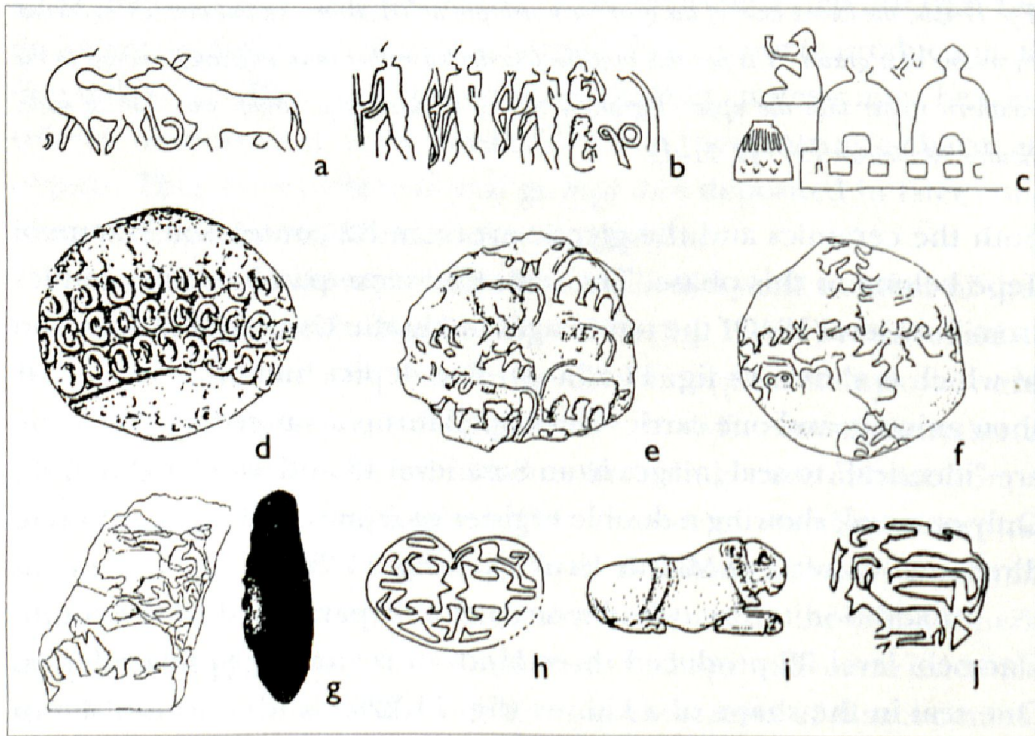
both the ceramics and the glyptic art from B2 contexts at Hacinebi Tepe belong to this phase. The seals find close parallels to examples from Susa level 18. Of the ten images of Middle Uruk type (a selection of which is shown in fig. 11.22a–g), five depict human beings, four show animals, and one carries ear-shaped forms arranged in rows. Nine are “identical” to seal images from Susa level 18 and/or Chogha Mish. Only one seal, showing a double register of felines walking in opposite directions, emulates a Middle Uruk type (fig. 11.22e).

In addition to the cylinder seals closely paralleled in the south, Hacinebi level B2 produced three kinds of regional glyptic evidence. One seal in the shape of a kidney (fig. 11.22h) is identical to stamp seals known in abundance from Tell Brak (fig. 11.21a–c) and found most recently at Hamoukar. The second parallel is a theriomorphic stamp in the shape of a recumbent lion engraved on the bezel with gouged animal figures (fig. 11.22i). The third type of stamp seal found at Hacinebi is either local to the immediate region or exhibits stylistic



**FIGURE 11.21**

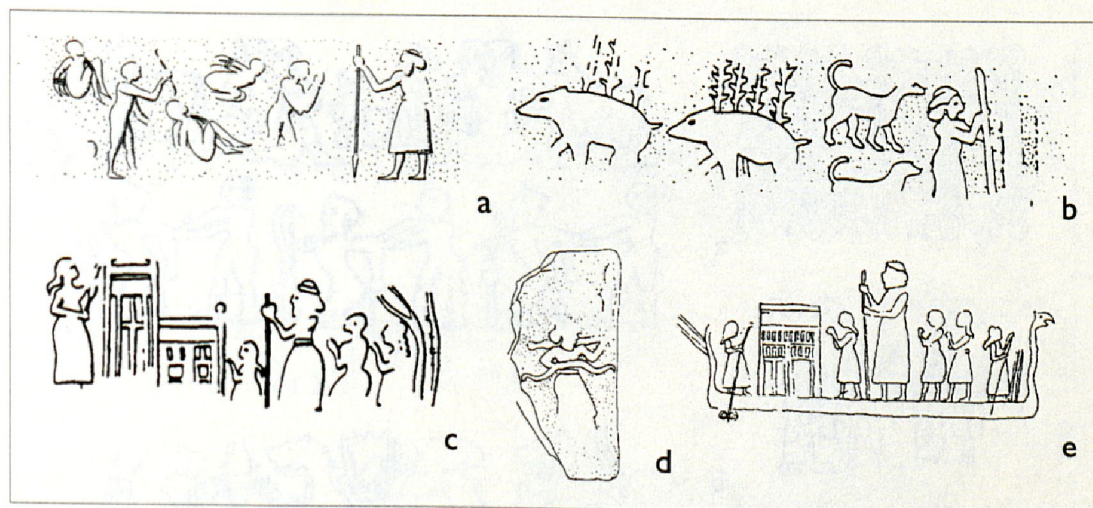
Stamp seals carved in stone with kidney-shaped, square, and circular forms. Late Middle Uruk/LC phase in the Jezira, found in the Eye Temple, the lowest level of the gray brick stratum at Tell Brak. Not to scale. Source: Mallowan 1947:pl. 17–19.



**FIGURE 11.22**

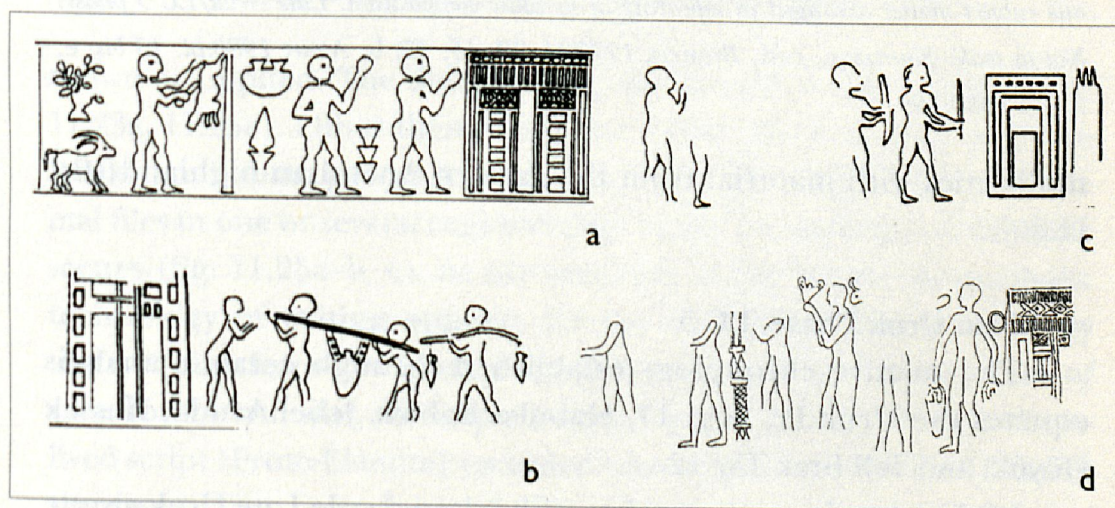
Drawings of seal impressions on administrative documents from the northern Euphrates, early Middle Uruk/LC 3 phase. (a–g) Hacinebi phase B2, from contexts with southern Uruk-type pottery. (h–j) Hacinebi phase B2, from contexts with only Late Chalcolithic pottery. Not to scale. Source: author.

## MESOPOTAMIAN INTRAREGIONAL RELATIONS



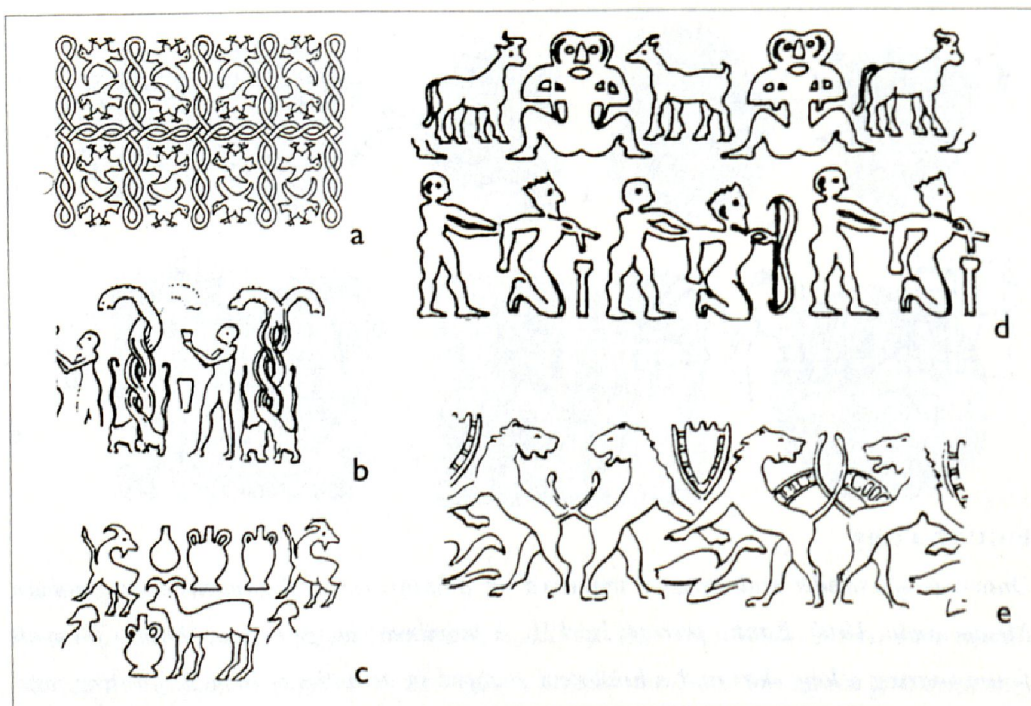
**FIGURE 11.23**

*Drawings of cylinder seal imagery impressed on administrative documents from southern Mesopotamia, Uruk, Eanna precinct level IV. A prominent image in this phase is the male figure wearing a long skirt and a headband engaged in activities of combat, hunting, and procession toward a monumental structure. Late Uruk/LC 5 phase. Not to scale. Sources: a, Brandes 1979:tafel 1, top; b–d, Amiet 1980:187–88, pl. 13bis (A), 665; e, Lenzen 1961:pl.26A.*



**FIGURE 11.24**

*Drawing of cylinder seal imagery impressed on administrative documents from southern Mesopotamia, Uruk, Eanna precinct level IV. A prominent image in this phase is the procession of laden male figures toward an architectural structure. Late Uruk/LC 5 phase. Not to scale. Sources: a, Brandes 1979:pl. 30; b–d, Amiet 1980:pl. 13bis (D), 203A, 1607.*



**FIGURE 11.25**

*Drawing of cylinder seal imagery impressed on administrative documents from southern Mesopotamia, Uruk, Eanna precinct level IV. Prominent images in this phase include various subject matter arranged in repeating or heraldic composition. Late Uruk/LC 5 phase. Not to scale. Sources: a, c–d, Brandes 1979:pl. 29, 15, 13; b, Amiet 1980:pl. 13 bis; e, Amiet 1980:199.*

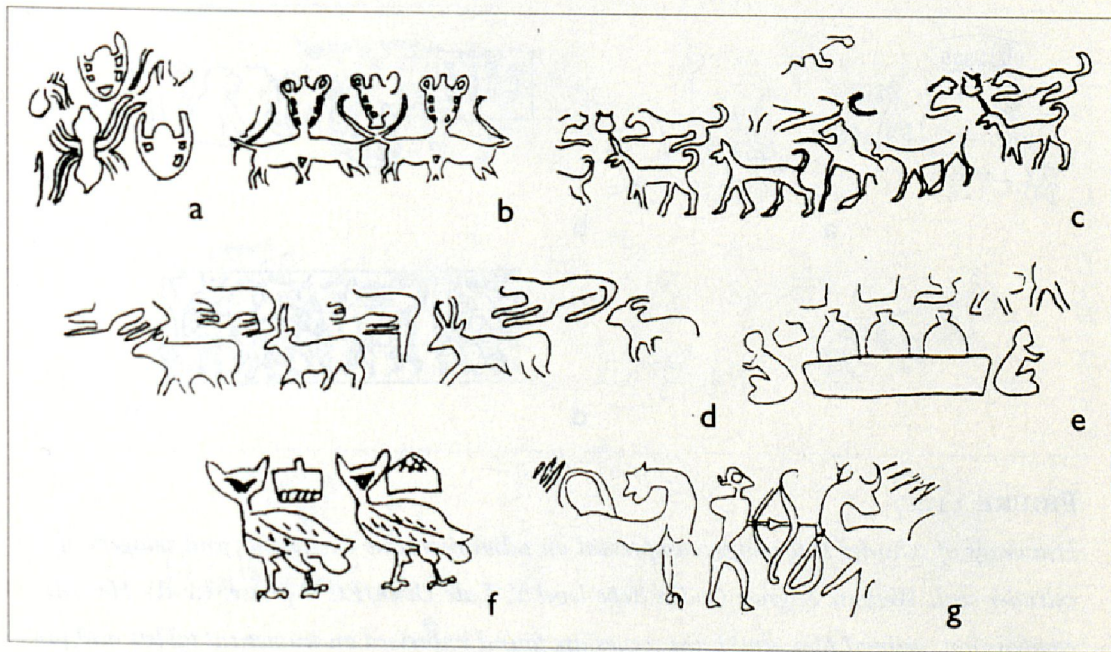
similarities with material from the eastern Anatolian highland (fig. 11.22j).

#### **Late Uruk Phase/LC 5**

The relative chronology established through ceramic analysis equates the Uruk IV, Susa 17, Habuba Kabira, Jebel Aruda, Hassek Höyük, and Tell Brak TW 12.

LC 5 is the phase we associate with “classic” style Late Uruk glyptic art known through famous sculptural masterpieces. Retrieved in large numbers from the various phases of level IV in the Eanna precinct at Uruk-Warka, the glyptic art from that site is distinctive both stylistically and iconographically (figs. 11.23–11.25). In southern Mesopotamia seals of this style have been found not only at Uruk-Warka but also at Tell 'Uqair and Jemdet Nasr. The imagery sometimes depicts either cult activity or social conflict. In these scenes, the so-called priest/king is



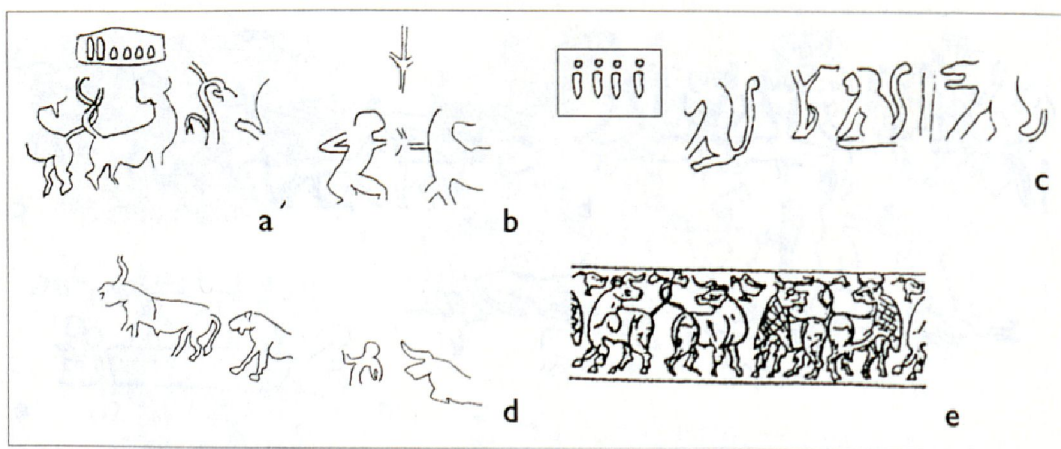


**FIGURE 11.26**

*Drawings of cylinder seal imagery impressed on administrative documents from Khuzistan, Susa Acropole sounding level 17. Prominent imagery includes repeating elements, heraldic compositions, animal files, worker scenes, and hunt scenes. Late Uruk/LC 5 phase. Not to scale. Source: a–b, f–g, Le Brun 1971:fig. 44; c–e, Le Brun 1978:figs. 9, 10.*

shown or implied. The defeated are shown bound and captive (figs. 11.23a, 11.25e). Other themes on Late Uruk (LC 5) seals from Uruk-Warka are human processions toward a structure (fig. 11.24) and animal files in one or several registers (fig. 11.25c) or arranged in heraldic scenes (fig. 11.25a–b, e). At the very end of this phase, the symbolic technology of writing appears for the first time. This technology was not transferred to other subregions engaged in the processes of state formation, with the important exception of Susa where a short-lived script (Proto-Elamite) recorded what might have been an Elamite language.

The Acropole sounding level 17 at Susa produced a small number of seals and administrative objects (fig. 11.26). Although we can see clear continuity from level 18, new features were introduced. Stylistically, the figures are more finely rendered, and they tend to be smaller. Compositions are denser with greater numbers of elements. In addition, they are more legible because there is less dovetailing of the individual design elements. The register principle is more common. A new theme



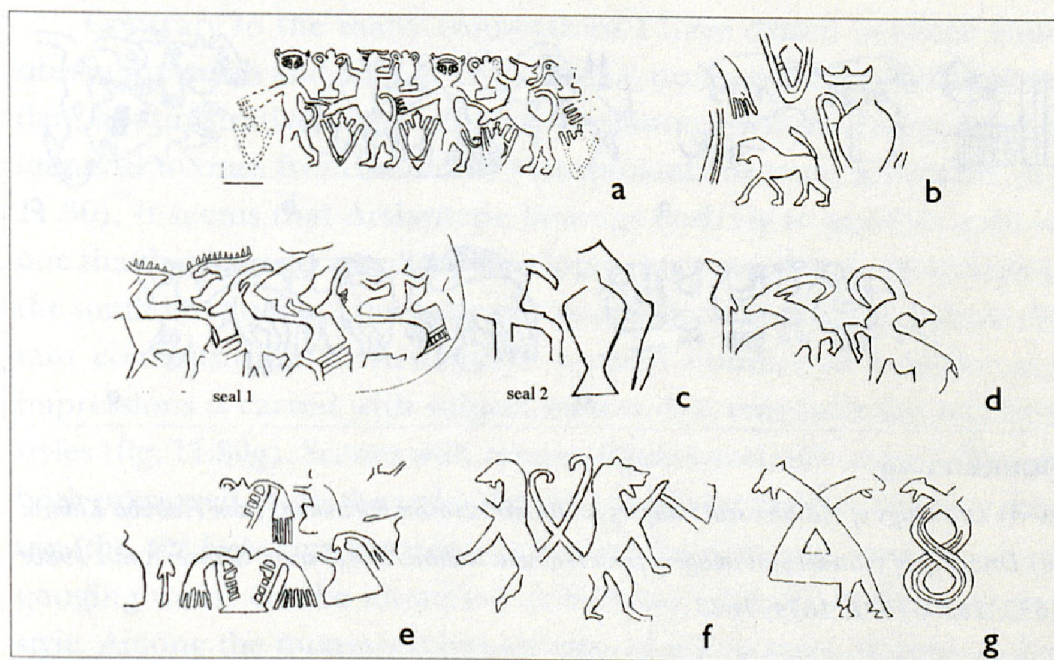
**FIGURE 11.27**

*Drawings of cylinder seal imagery impressed on administrative documents and imagery of a cylinder seal. Western Zagros, Godin Tepe level V, Late Uruk/LC 5 phase. (a–d) Heraldic composition, animal files, and hunt scenes are found impressed on numerical tablets and jar stoppers. (e) The imagery of this seal belongs to the early Proto-Elamite phase in terms of both its iconography and its style of carving. Not to scale. Sources: a, d–e, Weiss and Young 1975:fig. 5; b–c, Amiet 1980:1675, 1676.*

of an archer actively engaged in hunting game (fig. 11.26g) is shared along the Tigris piedmont, both at Godin Tepe level V and at Nineveh.

Design elements that strongly prefigure the Proto-Elamite style can be seen in the glyptic recovered from level 17 of the Acropole sounding at Susa (fig. 11.26f). While not of primary interest to us here, these new elements suggest that a new regional character was evolving in Khuzistan that was different from the previous traditions, which were closely shared across the entire alluvium in the Middle Uruk (LC 3–4) period. Among the unstratified materials from Susa that can be associated with level 17 on the basis of their seal impressions is a group of about twenty tablets that carry one or at the most two signs. These are the regional response to the invention of writing that was occurring in southern Mesopotamia and that was the basis for the subsequent development of the Proto-Elamite script.

Until now we have not seen the Middle Uruk seal style in the Zagros Mountains, where the Late Ubaid/Early Uruk seal tradition continued unaffected by developments to the west. However, at Godin Tepe we have a situation similar to that seen at Hacinebi. Southern administrative materials, this time closely comparable to those from

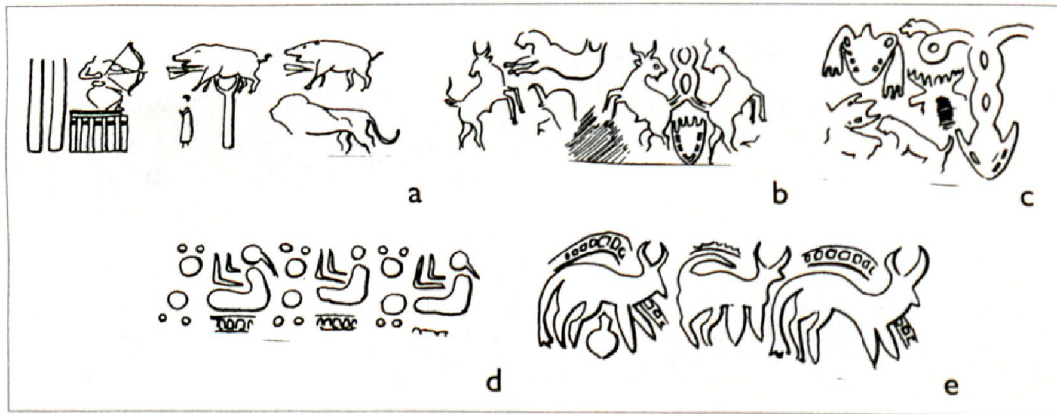
**FIGURE 11.28**

*Drawings of cylinder seal imagery impressed on administrative documents from the Jezirah, Tell Brak TW level 12 pit. Found with southern-type ceramics. Repeating elements, heraldic composition, animal files, and twisted snakes appear in the imagery. Late Uruk/LC phase 5. Not to scale. Source: Oates and Oates 1997:fig. 14.*

Susa 17, including strong precursors to the Proto-Elamite administrative tools, appear in Godin V (fig. 11.27a–e).

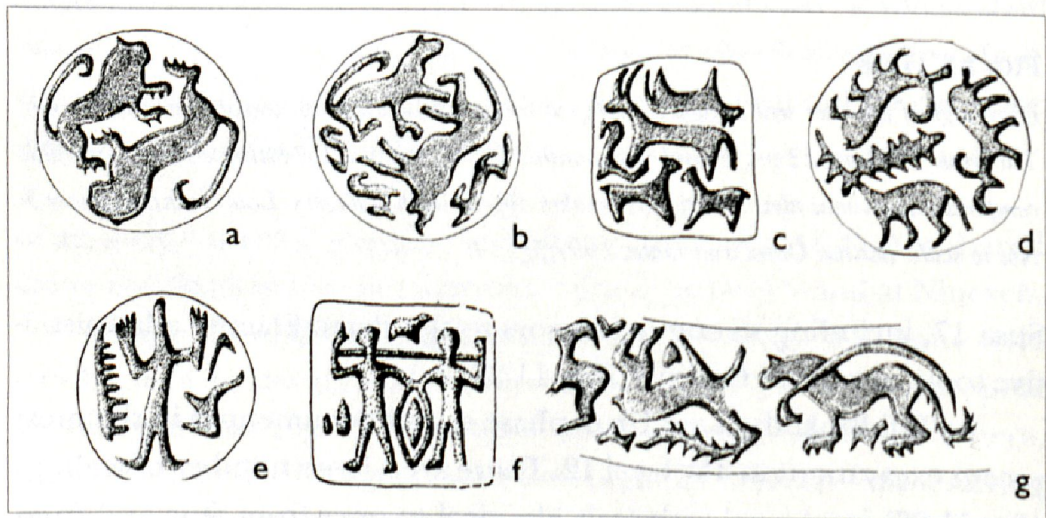
At Tell Brak, the Late Uruk phase is well documented in the most recent excavations in TW level 12. There are a large number of sealings (fig. 11.28) impressed with seals identical to ones from Susa and from Uruk-Warka. This commonality confirms the continued strong connection of Brak with the south (see fig. 11.25a–e).

When it was excavated in the 1960s, Habuba Kabira was the first site to give us clear evidence for people from the south living in the upper reaches of the Euphrates River basin. Shortly after the first results from Habuba Kabira were reported, this impression was confirmed by finds at Jebel Aruda. From more recent work at Sheikh Hassan and Tell Qraya, we now know that Habuba was late in the long period of southern presence at sites along the Euphrates. While Sheikh Hassan continued to be occupied, Habuba Kabira and the surrounding sites were established in the Late Uruk phase as a major southern presence. The administrative materials do not include writing. Rather the hollow clay balls, tags, and



**FIGURE 11.29**

(a–d) Drawings of cylinder seal imagery on administrative documents from Habuba Kabira. (e) Drawing of cylinder seal imagery from Habuba Kabira. Not to scale. Source: Amiet 1980: 1632, 1630, 1631, 1634, 1633.



**FIGURE 11.30**

Drawings of stamp and cylinder seal imagery impressed on administrative documents from eastern Anatolia, Arslantepe level 6. Not to scale. Source: Frangipane and Palmieri 1983a:figs. 68–71.

numerical tablets are identical to ones known from Susa level 18. The glyptic style preserved on the administrative documents is identical to that from Susa 17 and to Eanna IV (fig. 11.29a–d). In addition, a seal from Habuba (fig. 11.29e) is cut locally in a style that emulates southern seal morphology (the cylinder) and iconography (a file of animals with a ladder pattern) but clearly belongs within the Anatolian regional style as we know it from Arslantepe (fig. 11.30).

Contrary to the many connections I have drawn between some sites in the north and Susa or Uruk-Warka, none of the incredibly abundant administrative materials from Arslantepe can be categorized as identical to ones from southern Mesopotamia or from Khuzistan (fig. 11.30). It seems that Arslantepe belongs entirely to another sphere, one that has knowledge of the developments toward state formation in the south but does not have any sustained, direct contact with those distant communities. At Arslantepe a small number of cylinder seal impressions is carved with subject matter that emulates the southern styles (fig. 11.30g). Scenes with human figures and with animal files are both preserved. Both the style of carving and the details of subject matter (the *tête beche* composition of caprids, for example, and the use of gouging tools) can be identified as features of an Anatolian regional style. Among the numerous impressions of stamp seals, Arslantepe has a wide range of what might be called the "Anatolian regional style." Like the Jazira style, this style is made up exclusively of stamp seals. However, unlike those of the Jazira, which have densely packed image fields, the Anatolian style most often depicts single animals or pairs of animals composed to fill the image field. The style of carving seen on these seals, with the pointed digits and generally gouging carving, may also be typical of the type (fig. 11.30a–e).

### CONCLUSION

A few overarching conclusions about intraregional relations during the era of state formation in southern Mesopotamia can be drawn from the glyptic evidence. It is clear that at the beginning of the process no one area was more highly advanced than another. Traditions of administrative tools were well established in all of the areas that are reviewed here. Further, the subregional traditions were never eradicated. During the Middle Uruk (LC 3–4) period, the traditions either continued to evolve internally, borrowed features in emulation of other subregional styles, or used administrative tools that for all intents and purposes belong to other traditions (the condition of "identity").

Although there is evidence for emulation of southern styles in the north at Tell Brak, Hacinebi, Habuba Kabira, and Arslantepe, there is no clearly identifiable emulation of northern regional style in the south. However, the rare examples of northern types of seals found in

the south suggest that contact and influence was not unidirectional.

The radical changes in the administrative toolkit and the symbolic technology that occur in the south do not occur in the north except in contexts where there is clear evidence for the presence of southern influence. It is at this point that the south becomes more administratively and symbolically complex than the north. However, at sites of comparable size in the north (e.g., Tell Brak) there is a parallel development in the administrative and symbolic technology that is independent of changes in the south. This strongly suggests that the north has an independent tradition that, while perhaps not as complex, is integrated with the southern administrative system during the Middle Uruk (LC 3–4) phase.

Probably the most important contribution that the glyptic evidence makes to a more refined understanding of the era of state formation in Greater Mesopotamia is establishing the existence of nodes where both traditions were equally strong. This is what the materials now known from Brak suggest. Further excavations will soon clarify these relations. The existence of these nodes does raise an essential question. The residents of Hacinebi had clear physical interactions with a group of Southerners. Contemporaneous Tell Brak did as well. Why then is there virtually no evidence at Hacinebi for the interaction of the two traditions?

The time depth that can be traced through the glyptic suggests that the contact between north and south lasted for a long period of time. That contact was not isolated but needs to be considered as one of a series of long-distance relations that perhaps went up the Euphrates but even more consistently went up the Tigris corridor, across the Jazira, and into the Anatolian highlands. At each point along the various routes there were connections to other centers, both more distant and nearby.

Perhaps Tell Brak was a central node in intraregional relations from the beginning of the era of state formation. Like Susa, Brak had active relations with centers in the south from the very beginning of the era. Unlike Susa, however, Brak was at a crossroad joining three distinct regions—the south, the east, and the west. As Lupton (1996) points out, ceramic style zones of the Euphrates and the Tigris Basins overlap at Brak in the LC 2–4. At some point a bit later, equivalent to the late

Middle Uruk (LC 4) phase, groups working through Brak extended their reach, perhaps from Brak to the Euphrates, at sites like Hacinebi. At the same time southern presence was also established at such sites as Sheikh Hassan, but without the mediation of Brak. In the LC 5, the southern presence may have increased further, as evidenced by settlements at Habuba Kabira and Jebel Aruda. With such a substantial presence there, Hacinebi fell out of use, perhaps with the route from Tell Brak diminishing in importance for some reason (although Brak itself remained pivotal to the movement in the Jazira). The influence of the southern system was felt as deep into the Anatolian highland as Arslantepe. At the same time as the Euphrates route became primary over the Jazira route, a similar change in the patterns of interaction from Susa occurs. At the site of Godin, administrative materials derived from Susa appear. Further to the north, the southern-type materials from Nineveh suggest the same source.

#### Notes

1. A recent neutron activation analysis of 150 sealings from fourth millennium B.C. Arslantepe reveals that those sealings were not clay, but a soft stone conglomerate thus far found to have been used for this purpose only at Arslantepe.

2. Simpson reports that no seals or administrative materials were found at Qraya. However, in the Dier Ezor Museum three sealings and a hollow clay ball are clearly labeled as coming from Qraya (personal observation, April 2000).

3. The "shaman" in early Mesopotamian art is the subject of a paper that I presented at the American Oriental Society's annual meeting in Toronto on March 30, 2001.