

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

GLYPHTIC IN THE 4TH-2ND  
MILLENNIUM

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INTRODUCTION

The history of Elam commences with the appearance of the proto-cuneiform writing system in Susa III (levels 17-16 of the Acropole) and the mention of its name in administrative texts of Urukagina of Lagash around the middle of the 3rd millennium BC. However, widespread evidence of common artistic expressions in glyptic art originating from an Elamite cultural background can already be seen at the beginning of 3rd millennium BC, with a homogenous cultural horizon involving the main political structures of western, central and eastern Iran (see *Proto-Elamite Period*). Seals and sealings were, however, widely known before the Proto-Elamite period and represent one of the most important sources of evidence for the cultural development of the Susiana plain and Iranian highlands.

The first evidence of seals in Iran extends back to the Early Chalcolithic period at Seh Gabi and Tepe Sabz (Kurdistan), when stamp seals exhibit the geometric decoration that would remain a key feature for the entire Chalcolithic period. These same geometric seals were found at Hissar I, where they are generally square in shape, although round and oval versions also occur. To be dated to the same period are the specimens from Tall-i Bakun with crossed lines attested at the end of the Ubaid period. Susa A seals found on the terrace of Susa bear cross-shaped designs very close to the Bakun tradition, and a small number represent humans or animals (generally bovines or goats) (Figure 31.2a-b). During the end of the 4th millennium BC in the Susa II period (Uruk phase; found in levels 27-17 of the *Acropole*), the themes, styles, iconography and morphology of seals undergo change. This production should be considered contemporary with the glyptic of Uruk IV, with new depictions in a broader scenic field, now representing rows of animals and anthropomorphic beings (Figure 31.2c-d). A new, widely discussed, production is attested in the so-called Proto-Elamite period, when the first Elamite indicators were incorrectly identified for a long time in the material collected in the same layers of the tablets of the Susa III period (see *Proto-Elamite Period*).

From the last years of the 4th millennium BC it is possible to follow an uninterrupted line of development, with discordances and heterogeneities, in the production

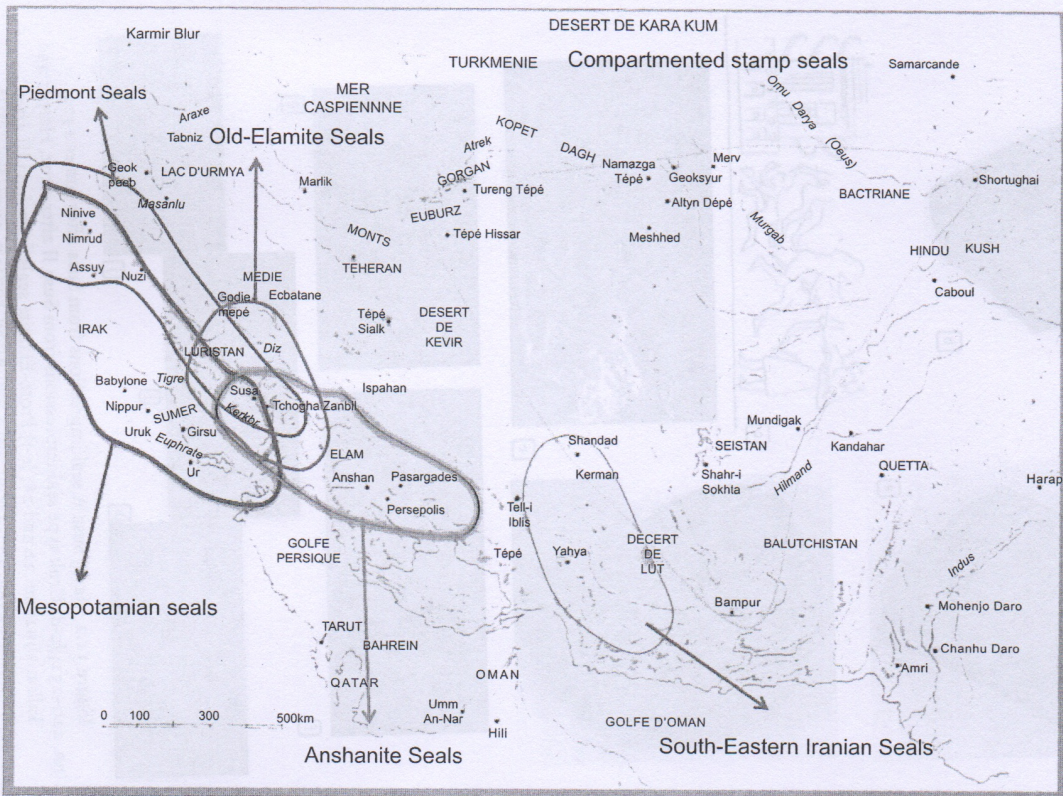


Figure 31.1 Regional developments of glyptic art during the Old-Elamite period (after Ascalone 2011: Figure 7.1).

of seals in the Elamite sphere. This line of development will be studied from a diachronic perspective to identify, wherever possible, internal sub-phases of production, contextual evidence and historical meanings (Tab. 31.1 and Figure 31.1).

### PROTO-ELAMITE PERIOD (CA. 3100–2800/ 2700 BC)

After the Uruk phase known in Lower Mesopotamia and Susiana, a new period was born. This Susa III period was identified as 'Proto-Elamite', following V. Scheil's (1900) initial attempt to create a relationship between a large group of Susa texts bearing seal impressions (approximately 1550) and the later Elamite tablets. The texts were found in levels 16–14b of the *Acropole* and in a limited excavation of the *Ville Royale*, confirming a date around the end of the 4th, and the beginning of 3rd millennium BC. There is no evidence, however, to confirm the purported link with the later Elamite tablets, either linguistically or graphically, and from a figurative and artistic perspective, no continuity is attested between the Proto-Elamite and the Old-Elamite period glyptic in either iconography or in style.

#### Susa III

The Proto-Elamite chronological sequences at Susa are well known in the third period of the city. The IIIA period has been identified in levels 16–14 of the *Acropole*, levels 18–15 of the *Ville Royale*, and in the Cc and Da stylistic phases of L. Le Breton, while the IIIB phase is attested in layers 14–13 of *Ville Royale* and the Db phase. The same markers of the Proto-Elamite cultural horizon have been found at Tall-i Ghazir, Tall-i Malyan (Middle and Late Banesh), Shahr-i Sokhra I, Tepe Sofalin, Artisman, Tol-e Nurabad, Tepe Siyalk IV, Tepe Hissar, Godin Tepe, Ozbaki, Tepe Yahya (IVC period), Miri Qalat IIIC and Mahroutabad III.

#### Proto-Elamite production

During the last years of the Uruk period, a Susian tradition emerged that would be well represented in successive Proto-Elamite corpora (Figure 31.2e–f). As proposed by H. Pittman (2001), the differences in iconography between the glyptic art of Uruk and Susa could be explained by the types of economic activities at both centres.

The glyptic of this period, widely diffused on the whole Iranian plateau, reproduces in its first developments simplified designs, usually geometric, that could be divided into four main styles: the classic style, the glazed stearite style, the wheel-cut style and the incised style. At Susa, the geometric patterns frequently use lozenges and chevrons, while Pittman's so-called 'Classic Proto-Elamite Style', found in levels 15–14 of the *Acropole*, is related to administrative tablets. In the Classic group, the geometric representation is replaced by animals acting as humans or flanking a stylized mountain with a possible tree at its summit. Depictions of lions attacking goats and cattle continue, and fantastic creatures appear only rarely. The style is vigorous, with each individual personage depicted in good proportion, but the carving appears flat and is still far from the Early Dynastic IIIB renderings.



Figure 31.2. [a–h] Susa A seal impressions from Susa after Amiet 1972: mn. 220–231; [c–d] Uruk-type seal impressions from Susa II after Aruz, Harper and Tallon 1992: mn. 22 and 28; [e–j] Proto-Elamite seals from Susa III after Mecquenem 1934: 195, Figure 30: 5 and Amiet 1972: n. 1000; [g–h] Early Dynastic seals (Early group) from Susa IVA after Ascalone 2011: mn. 1A.19–20; [i–j] Early Dynastic seals (Later group) from Susa IVA after Ascalone 2011: mn. 1A.51, 57.

On the basis of style and iconography, the glazed stearite group can be organised in two main categories, the 'hatched' and the 'Multiple Element' group (Pitman 1980: 129), in which the numerous designs apparently lack any relational sense. Stamp seals attributed to this period are also known at Susa and Tall-i-Malyan, where the main representation is geometric, very close to the contemporary cylinder seal production.

#### EARLY-ELAMITE PERIOD (CA. 2800/2700–2300 BC)

The sumerogram NIM, used to denote Elam, appears with certainty in Early Dynastic II and III periods. Its presence is attested in the Sumerian King List where Elam and Awan are both mentioned in their territorial disputes against Enmebaragesi of Kish and Ur. For these reasons and on the basis of the glyptic documentation in which the seeds of an Elamite iconographic and figurative heritage appear for the first time, it is preferable to identify an Early phase between the Proto-Elamite period and the dynastic history of Elam.

From the end of the first quarter of the 3rd millennium BC, during the pre-Sargonid era, artistic representations from Mesopotamian workshops are unknown. Between the Proto-Elamite expressions and the appearance of the first evidence of iconographic and stylistic traits rooted in Elamite cultural heritage, Susian glyptic production is very close to that of the contemporary Mesopotamian ateliers. Simultaneously, to the east in the Jiroft valley, a new glyptic art is well represented in the recent excavations carried out by Y. Madjidzadeh (2008) at Konar Sandal South, close to the Early Dynastic III phase but with peculiar artistic features that would be adopted in the next period in the Early South-Eastern Iranian production (see *Early South-Eastern Iranian production*).

#### Susa IVA

The IVA period at Susa is known in layers 4–3 of the *Acropole* and 12–9 of the *Ville Royale*. It was also identified in the Dcd stylistic phase of Louis Le Breton (1957) and in the so-called 'XXV siècle' by R. de Mecquenem (1934). The glyptic of Susa shows a strong homogeneity with the corpora from Mesopotamia, further confirming the cultural alternation of the Susiana plain throughout its history. Only a few specimens reveal figurative details that probably originated in the highlands. In a more generic analysis we should assume that the whole corpus of Susa IVA is unrelated to the earlier Proto-Elamite production and is best regarded as emerging from a different workshop to the Mesopotamian glyptic art, as well as Fara, Kish, Ur, Lagash and the sites of the Diyala region.

#### Early Dynastic production (ca. 2600–2300 BC)

The Susa IVA glyptic should be considered a different expression from the Mesopotamian production dated to the Early Dynastic III period, allowing for the identification of at least two main groups of seals: (i) an early group that shows comparisons with Fara (Imdugud-sukurru phase), Kish A, Diyala (ED IIIa) and royal tombs of Ur (Meskalamdug period) seals (Figure 3.1.2g-h); and (ii) a later group with relations in the Ur I (Mesaneпада) and Lagash (Lugalanda) corpora (Figure 3.1.2i-1).

The early and late productions seem to be represented by a corpus of seals mainly coming from Susa, although seals from Luristan (two from Bani Surmah and Kalleh Nissar) were also found. Only six seals were published in well-stratified contexts; except for the specimen found in the level 4a of the *Ville Royale I* dated to the Susa V period, all the other seals were found in Early Dynastic archaeological contexts. The early glyptic of Susa IVA follows the 'pyramid scheme' known from Mesopotamian productions but with a flatter and less voluminous stylistic representation than the one observed in the Ur and Diyala workshops. During the early phase, the principal theme in the 'figure-band' is that of lions attacking antelopes/cervids, with or without a naked human figure. In the last years of the Early Dynastic period and in the later layers of Susa IVA, new artistic expressions are apparent in the adoption of subjects and icons such as banquet scenes, heraldic representations, building themes and the god-ship. From a stylistic point of view, the new seals show a more volumetric character, care for details and partial reduction of personages with a centripetal reading of the scene, which overcomes the continuous frieze of the 'figure-band' type. The last specimens of this period seem to introduce a new vision of the seal's space that would be widely developed by the Akkadian workshops, confirming a historical continuity in the cultural sequences of the Susiana plain and its main site.

#### Konar Sandal production (ca. 2500/2400–2300 BC)

A group of seals and sealings were found in the Jiroft valley at Konar Sandal where a new civilization has been identified in recent years by Iranian excavations conducted under the direction of Y. Madjidzadeh. Most of the sealings came from Trench III, and they should be regarded as local productions that can contribute to the understanding of the chronology of Konar Sandal South.<sup>1</sup> The sealings show iconographic traits close to the Mesopotamian repertory in which the figurative apparatus is more chaotic, within a dynamic figurative structure. At the same time, the square stamp sealings found in Konar Sandal South should be considered an artistic expression of south-eastern Iranian culture. This early group of glyptic is close to the successive productions defined as 'South-East Iranian' by the author (Figure 3.1.3a-d, see also *Early South-Eastern Iranian production and Late South-Eastern Iranian production*).

#### OLD-ELAMITE I PERIOD (CA. 2300–2100 BC)

From an artistic point of view, a truly Elamite period begins with the appearance of iconographic and stylistic traits associated with the Elamite dynasty of Awan. During this time new motifs, themes and styles appear in the glyptic art of Susa, including seals and sealings found in the *Ville Royale* bearing official inscriptions of Awanite kings. During the Akkadian control of Susiana, the rulers of Susa, presumably influenced by an Elamite highland heritage, were able to formulate original artistic solutions, not yet standardised and encoded, that would be widely used during the Simashki and especially the Sukkalmahk dynasty, when glyptic art was incorporated into a propagandistic figurative agenda.

### Susa IVB and VA

The Susa IVB and VA periods are well represented in levels 8–5 of the *Ville Royale*, in the B VII period of R. Ghirshman on the *Ville Royale* (only Susa VA), in layers 2–1 of the *Acropole* (for Susa IVB) and in the De typological phases of Louis Le Breton. The main corpus of seals follows the iconographic, thematic and stylistic features of the Akkadian period, although in some cases with a figurative expression rooted in the Susian-Elamite cultural background. In addition, it is possible to recognize two other productions that, while influenced by contemporary Akkadian glyptic, are autonomous in their iconographic and stylistic traits: (i) an Awanite group (ca. 2350–2150 BC) (Figure 3.1.3e–f); and a (ii) Piedmont group (ca. 2400–2200 BC) (Figure 3.1.3g–h).

### Awanite group in the Akkadian workshops at Susa (ca. 2350–2150 BC)

In the wide and homogeneous Akkadian production of Susa seals, we can identify a single locally manufactured group influenced by the highland cultural heritage in style and iconography (Figure 3.1.3e–f). Although an Elamite, or somewhat similar, production is recognizable only at the end of the 3rd millennium BC during the Simashki dynasty (compare with *Old-Elamite II–III production*), it is in this period that some peculiar stylistic and iconographic aspects (known later in Elamite glyptic art) appear for the first time. Compared to the Akkadian glyptic, the style is less volumetric, with reduced plasticity. The representation is more schematic, with less attention given to details; often recalling the Early Dynastic III productions. The themes, including mythological scenes, are unknown in the Akkadian corpus and are instead strongly rooted in the Iranian highland cultural heritage. At the same time, Susian workshops seem to adopt new Elamite motifs such as the god-snake (later revised by the Old-Elamite stone-cutters), the worshipper or high functionary with crossed arms before a god, the figure with ears of corn sprouting from the shoulders, the goat with human head and the typical flat tiara of the successive Elamite production. The seal of Epirimupi, for example, shows traits unknown to the classicism of the Akkadian style; in detail the long hair on the shoulders of the main figure finds its closest relations in the contemporary production of south-eastern Iran, known in the Konar Sandal, Gonur, Susa and Shahdad figurative art.

### Piedmont production (ca. 2400–2200 BC)

Incorrectly defined in the past as Gutian (Frankfort 1955: 33–34),<sup>2</sup> one group of seals should be regarded as a piedmont production for its geographical diffusion in the areas very close to the Zagros-Taurus mountains and in Luristan province (Figure 3.1.3g–h). These seals were found at Susa, Kamartan II, Kalleh Nissar, Sorkh Dom-i Luri and Tepe Giyan, but also at sites outside Iran, such as Ur, Tell Asmar, Tell Brak, Kish, Tell Suleimeh and Assur. The archaeological contexts of the above seals in the Diyala region allow for the suggestion of a timeline between 2400 and 2200 BC (slightly higher than the chronological evaluations of Amiet 1972: 192). The style appears coarse, with a small notch that reduces expression and clarity. The themes depicted are homogeneous, mainly concentrating on the hero in combat with

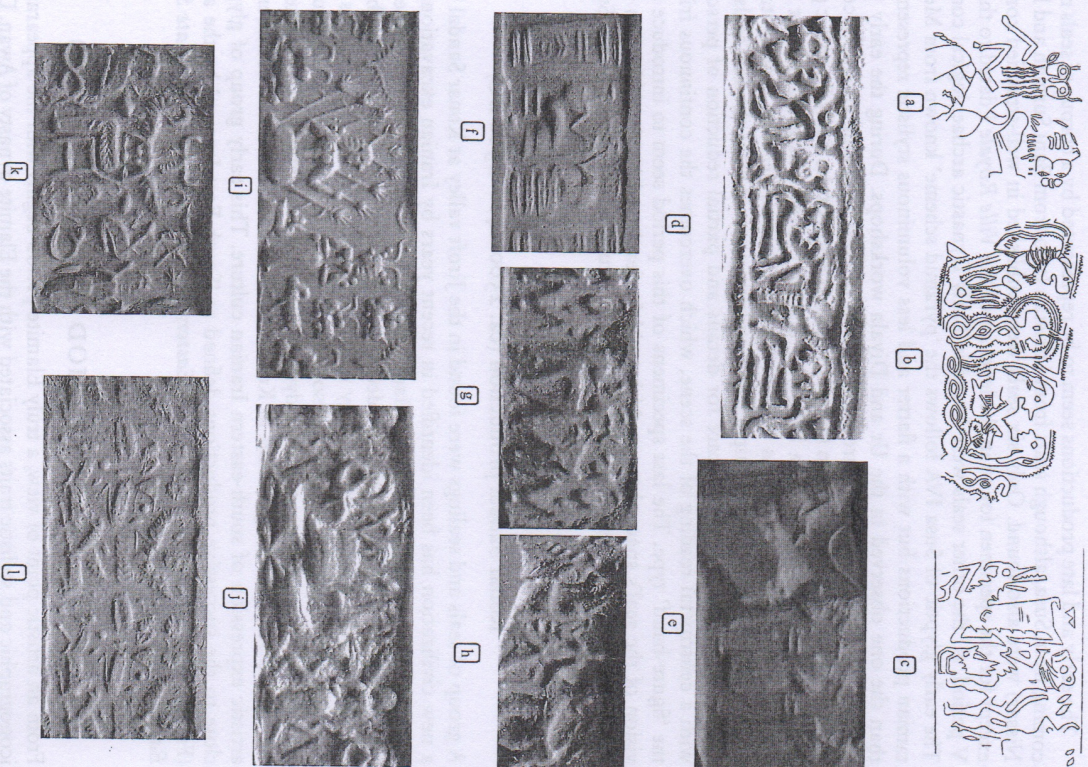


Figure 3.1.3 [a–c] Konar Sandal sealings after Pitman 2008: Figs. 29b, 30 g and 32a; [d] Seal from Shahdad after Ascalone 2011: n. 4A.2; [e–f] Awanite seals from Susa IVB after Ascalone 2011: nn. 1B.164, 150; [g–h] Piedmont seals from Shahdad after Ascalone 2011: nn. 4B.1–2; [i] Early South-Eastern Iranian seal from Tepe Yahya after Ascalone 2011: n. 4B.10; [j] Early South-Eastern Iranian seal from Jalalabad after Ascalone 2011: n. 4B.14.

a mythological double-headed being, replacing the figures of the Akkadian tradition such as lions and/or antelopes.

#### Early South-Eastern Iranian production (ca. 2300–2200/2100 BC) (Takab III<sub>2</sub>; Yahya IVc1-IVb)

After the earlier Konar Sandal production, a new glyptic art emerges in the Halil valley and more generally in south-eastern Iran,<sup>3</sup> involving Shahdad, a gateway city lying between the Oxus and the Jiroft civilisations. This group of seals can be divided into an early corpus, close to the Konar Sandal South workshops<sup>4</sup> and chlorite vessel manufacture, and a later corpus dating to the end of the 3rd and the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC (I return to this issue in *Late South-Eastern Iranian production*): (i) Early group (ca. 2300–2200/2100 BC) (Figure 31.31-1); (ii) Late group (ca. 2200/2100–1900/1800 BC) (see *Late South-Eastern Iranian production* and Figure 31.6a-d).

Dated between the third and fourth quarter of the 3rd millennium BC, the seals of this period show a balanced division of space with more order and accuracy than the earlier Konar Sandal production (compare with *Susa IVA*). The figures are now depicted with greater attention to detail, in some cases oriented towards a new realistic expression in which the musculature of each individual figure is well treated. At the same time, the chaotic representation of the previous period is left behind in favour of a symmetrical and balanced division of the space. The style seems to be homogenous, with some comparisons with classical Akkadian glyptic art, particularly in the significant use of volumetric figures; not a few specimens show the use of the drill that would be a specific feature of south-eastern Iranian glyptic until the end of its production around 1900/1800 BC. The figures fill the entire scene, usually mythological in subject, in which a god and goddess without tiaras or other identifying symbols<sup>5</sup> represent the most important personages. The winged goddess, the goddess in her fertile and cosmic appearances and the god/goddess with snakes seem to play an especially important role in the south-eastern Iranian pantheon.

After the Proto-Elamite and Konar Sandal productions, the glyptic art of central/eastern Iran shows for the first time an indigenous development without any cultural intrusion in the formation of its figurative and stylistic heritage. If the Proto-Elamite 'phenomenon' seems to have originated in western Iran and the Konar Sandal workshops (Trench III) follow the contemporary artistic and figurative expressions of the Early Dynastic III period in Mesopotamia (see *Susa IVA*), the Early phase of the South-Eastern Iranian glyptic represents the earlier production of seals strongly rooted in the cultural reservoir of central and eastern Iran. This production is attributable to the Yahya IVc1-IVb and Takab III<sub>2</sub> periods, contemporary with Shahri-Sokhta III in the Hilmand valley, Miri Qalat IV in the Makran region, Adji Kui I-2A (Namazga V) in the Oxus area and, finally, Harappa 3A-B in the Indus valley.

#### OLD-ELAMITE II-III PERIOD (CA. 2100–1520 BC)

During the Simashki and Sukkalmakh sovereignty, a radical change is attested in the official figurative codes of the ruling class. There is evidence of an independent production, very close to the Elamite world, and a major effort focussed on dynastic celebration. This effort is attested in the new titles of the Elamite kings, in the

appearance of dynastic inscriptions, in the correspondences between rock art and iconographic expressions on seals and in the numerous religious buildings and consolidation of a divine pantheon under the hegemony of the divine couple Napirisha and Kiririsha. It seems that the first Sukkalmakh sovereigns began a new official program in which standardised figurative codes were used to celebrate the dynasty and the unity of the reign (Ascalone 2011). In this period, a wide diffusion of royal inscriptions is attested on seals after their sporadic occurrences in the Awan glyptic art (see Epirmupi, Espun and later Puzur-Inshushinak seals). Dynastic official seals such as those of Kindartu, Tan-Ruhurater, Idadu, Ebarat, Arthushu, Palatsham, Kuk-Kirmash, Tetepmada (?), Temti-Agun, Tan-Uli and Kuk-Nashur should be considered closely associated with the monumental displays of royal imagery exhibited in the Kurangun and Naqsh-e Rostam reliefs.

#### Susa VB and Kattari period (Simashki and Sukkalmakh dynasties)

It is only quite recently that an autonomous and independent Elamite glyptic art has been identified in the evidence coming from Tall-i Malyan and Susa, where a large number of bituminous seals, also called 'populairé' (Amiet 1972: 239), were found (Anshanite group).<sup>6</sup> However, a full identification of an Anshanite glyptic art remains difficult due to scanty knowledge of archaeological contexts and the limited excavations carried out in the Fars region.

In this same period of Anshanite production, a new artistic expression was produced by the Elamite workshops (Old-Elamite group), different from the contemporary Anshanite glyptic but originating from the same Elamite cultural context (see *Old-Elamite II-III production*). A group of around 200 Old-Elamite seals should be regarded as having an Elamite cultural heritage due to their iconographic, stylistic and thematic divergences from the Mesopotamian and Anshanite seals, their strong iconographic relations with Elamite figurative art and finally, for the presence of a broad Elamite onomastic.

#### Old-Elamite II-III production (ca. 2100–1520 BC)

The knowledge of Old-Elamite glyptic art at Susa enables the identification of a new artistic production very closely related to that of contemporary Mesopotamia in themes and style but with specific iconographic links to the Anshanite seal group. On this basis we can support the presence of an autonomous art, influenced by its dual cultural personality, with an internal stylistic division and four main historical and cultural phases of production: (i) Old-Elamite II. Early Phase (ca. 2031–1920/1900 BC) (Figure 31.4a-b); (ii) Old-Elamite IIIA. Transitional Phase (ca. 1920/1900–1800 BC) (Figure 31.4c-d); (iii) Old-Elamite IIIB. Classic Phase (ca. 1800–1650 BC) (Figure 31.4e-f); (iv) Old-Elamite IIIC. Late Phase (ca. 1650–1520 BC) (Figure 31.4g-h).

The development of the Old-Elamite glyptic phases is well supported by the royal inscriptions on the seals, although sometimes correspondences with names, such as Ebarat or Idadu, present interpretive challenges. The Early phase of Old-Elamite II-III production is related to the Simashki workshops (ca. 2031–1920/1900 BC), while the three later phases belong to the Sukkalmakh period, showing a long process of development of Elamite figurative heritage (ca. 1900–1520 BC). Only with the Sukkalmakh

sovereigns, coinciding with a period of maximum geographic expansion, would a new artistic base finally be established. After a first transitional phase (ca. 1900–1800 BC), very close to the iconographic models of the Simashki period, glyptic art seems to become part of a propaganda program that the Sukkalmahk regency developed within the framework of a wider political strategy (ca. 1800–1650 BC). The creation of an artistic identity imposed new figurative and iconographic codes that would be widely used by Sirukruh on wards. Like Simashki dynasty glyptic, the Sukkalmahk glyptic was influenced by contemporary Mesopotamian figurative development, although a repetitive and systematic use of Elamite iconographies was encoded and new emphasis was placed on more detailed representations and volumetric styles.

#### Old-Elamite II: the early phase (ca. 2031–1920/1900 BC)

This group is strongly homogenous in style, iconography and themes, with clear Neo-Sumerian/Old-Babylonian influences in an indigenous cultural background. The style is generally very close to the Mesopotamian contemporary glyptic art, although with widespread inaccuracies, low plasticity and a wide presence of specific motifs clearly rooted in the Elamite cultural reservoir (see in particular the slightly angular moon, the flat tiara and the crossed arms of the standing figure). Under the Simashki dynasty, a class of seals distinct from the Mesopotamian tradition was systematically developed for the first time, not always successfully, in order to create a new artistic identity. The transition to the new Sukkalmahk dynasty seems to have been rather gradual, and its sovereigns actively incorporated the Simashki heritage, making considerable effort to devise, in a systematic way, a new propaganda code related to their Elamite origins.

#### Old-Elamite IIIA: the transitional phase (ca. 1920/1900–1800 BC)

The glyptic of the first years of Sukkalmahk period seems to be deeply influenced by previous Simashkian art. The style is very close to the Mesopotamian workshops, although a clear Elamite production can be identified. This production appears to be a transition between Simashki glyptic art and the mature elaborations of the Classic Phase. From a stylistic point of view, the seals follow a double cultural path. The verticality of the figures, an equitable distribution of space and a static vision of representation resulted in an overall heavy and repetitive depiction. The small size of the personages, the uncertain proportions, the flat volume of the images and the sharp line of the figures are all very close to the contemporary Anshanite corpus of seals and to the earlier Simashki production; the themes are repetitive, although with unimaginable variability when compared with the previous period.<sup>7</sup>

#### Old-Elamite IIIB: the classic phase (ca. 1800–1650 BC)

The new iconography and style that commenced in the previous period would be widely diffused on seals of Sirukruh's reign. This classic or mature phase of Sukkalmahk glyptic art is defined by an Elamite identity and follows the new political claims of the



Figure 31.4 [a-b] Early Old-Elamite seals from Susa after Ascalone 2011: nn. 2A.8, 37; [c] Transitional Old-Elamite seal from ex Pahlavi Collection after Ascalone 2011: n. 2B.10; [d] Transitional Old-Elamite seal from Susa after Ascalone 2011: n. 2B.15; [e-f] Classic Old-Elamite seals from Susa after Ascalone 2011: n. 2B.28, 52; [g] Late Old-Elamite seal from ex Mazda Collection after Ascalone 2011: n. 2B.145; [h] Late Old-Elamite seal from ex Pahlavi Collection after Ascalone 2011: n. 2B.147.

Elamite sovereigns, now oriented towards the west, also attested in the Mari texts dating to the Zimri-Lim regency. The style of this group identifies a dynastic production with clearly defined Elamite figurative codes and a manufacturing in which provincial workshops or unofficial stone-cutting ateliers are presumably to be recognised. Contemporary with the political vicissitudes of the Sukkalmahk dynasty in the second half of the 17th century BC, a change in the style of the Elamite glyptic is documented by a group of seals that should be assigned to a late phase of development.

#### Old-Elamite IIIc: the late phase (ca. 1650–1520 BC)

The Old-Elamite glyptic art of the final years of the Sukkalmahk dynasty shows iconographic and stylistic solutions very close to the previous phase, although with a more accentuated stylization and new standardization of figures. The themes are the same as the Classic phase, but the style is rougher and less attention is given to iconographic details. Two main groups of production can be recognized: an earlier group still tied to the previous tradition, and a later group probably dating to the 16th century BC. An exaggerated stylization is now present, and a loss of Elamite iconographic heritage is attested in scenes in which clarity prevails over narration. The themes are the same as the previous period, now canonized, with a recovery of the more archaic presentation scene in front of a seated god. At the same time, new motifs appear, as well as the row of schematic human beings on the whole surface of seal. The subjects of Elamite glyptic art during the last years of Sukkalmahk regency seem to follow the developments of the Kassite workshops in Mesopotamia, while the style and iconographic traits belong to an Elamite cultural background.

#### Anshanite production (ca. 2100–1700 BC)

Simultaneous to the Old-Elamite production, a new glyptic art was produced in the Simashki and Sukkalmahk periods (Figure 3.1.5). Although the seals belonging to this group were mainly found at Susa, and far fewer were from Tall-i-Malyan (Anshan), they are generally called 'Anshanite' to underline their relation with the core of the Elamite reign. This production shows new stylistic and iconographic traits that could be recognized in a simple and repetitive epigraphic formula, in a lengthening of the figures, a generic deleting of the iconographic details, a rough character and a strong stylization of the motifs, which show close relations with Old-Assyrian and Cappadocian glyptic art. The iconographic innovations on the standard presentation scene can be mainly recognized in the elimination of the introductory figure, the absence of the tiara on the receiving god/king seated on the throne, the depiction of the personages with the typical 'Elamite hairstyle' and the posture of the worshipper or high official with arms outstretched as well as crossed.

The chronological limits of this production are not clear, but certain evaluations can be made:

- (1) Seventeen Anshanite seals were found at Susa by Jacques de Morgan on the *Acropole* in the foundation of the Inshushinak temple (Ur III period), two in the Donjon, three by Roland de Mecquenem in the graves of the *Ville Royale*

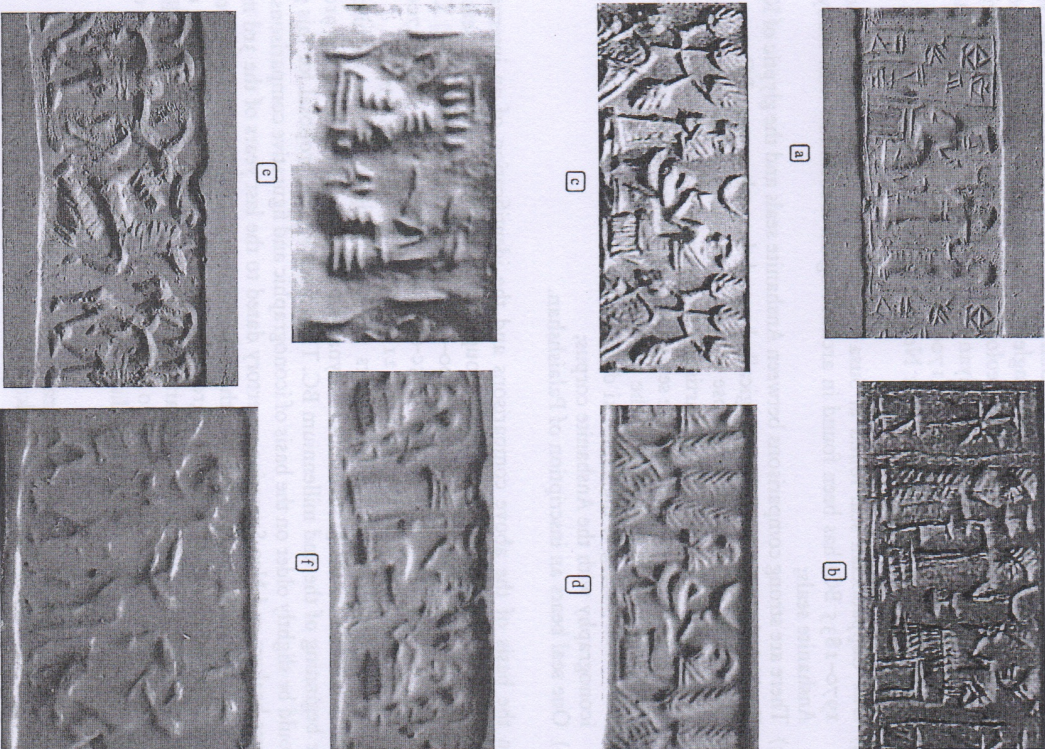


Figure 3.1.5 [a] Early Anshanite seal from Susa after Amiet 1972: n. 1687;  
 [b] Early Anshanite seal from Private Collection after Ascalone 2011: n. 3A.4;  
 [c-d] Classic Anshanite seals from Susa after Amiet 1972: nn. 1895, 1890;  
 [e] 'Eastern' Anshanite seals from Susa after Ascalone 2011: n. 3B.221f;  
 [f] 'Eastern' Anshanite seals from Choga Mish after Ascalone 2011: n. 3B.229g;  
 [g-h] Late Anshanite seal from Susa after Ascalone 2011: nn. 3C.4, 21.

- contemporary to the BV Roman Ghirshman layers, dating to the last years of the 20th and 19th century BC. A single seal was found by R. de Mecquenem in a grave of the *XXIII siècle* in archaeological association with Ur-III materials;
- (2) The Anshanite seals from Tall-i-Malyan were found in the Kafrazi period, approximately dated to 2300/2200–1800/1700 BC (Ascalone 2015);
  - (3) Anshanite seals were found in the Neo-Sumerian and Isin/Larsa layers of the Diyala region;
  - (4) One Cappadocian seal found at Susa and dated to the Kültepe II period (ca. 1970–1835 BC) has been found in archaeological association with many other Anshanite seals;
  - (5) There are strong comparisons between Anshanite seals and the glyptic of Kültepe II which do not extend chronologically beyond the 19th century BC;
  - (6) The themes on seals are very close to the Neo-Sumerian tradition, successively converged in the Isin and Larsa artistic expressions;
  - (7) The rough character of Anshanite seals finds important comparisons with several Susian seals dated to the end of the 3rd millennium BC;
  - (8) Some seals dating to the Simashki dynasty have very close relations in style and iconography with the Anshanite corpus;
  - (9) One seal bears an inscription of Palaishshan.

On the basis of the above comparisons and the identification of an internal stylistic line of development, four main groups in the Anshanite corpus of seals may be recognized: (i) Early group (ca. 2100–2000 BC) (Figure 3.1.5a-b); (ii) Classic group (ca. 2000–1800 BC) (Figure 3.1.5c-d); (iii) Late group (ca. 1800–1700 BC) (Figure 3.1.5g-h); (iv) 'Eastern' group (ca. 2100–1800 BC) (Figure 3.1.5e-f).

The so-called 'Eastern' group appears particularly significant for its historical value related to the integrative cultural dynamics of Elam during the end of 3rd, and the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC. The chronological proposal for this group should be slightly older on the basis of iconographic and figurative comparisons, with silver beakers and Neo-Sumerian repertory dated to the last years of the 3rd millennium BC, and the Bactrian statuettes, the iconographies on the Shahdad standard and South-Eastern Iranian cylinder seals group dating to the end of 3rd/beginning of the 2nd millennium BC. The above comparisons might allow us to define generically this group as an eastern production due to its wide diffusion in the figurative art of the eastern Iranian plateau and Oxus civilisation.

#### Late South-Eastern Iranian production (ca. 2200/ 2100–1900/1800 BC) (Takab III-I; Yahya IVA; Gonur Phase)

A later production of seals in south-eastern Iran is represented in the archaeological contexts of Gonur, Tepe Yahya and Tôd. The Gonur seals were respectively found in a grave of Gonur North dated to the last century of the 3rd millennium BC (ca. 2100–2000 BC) and in the so-called '*temples des sacrifices*', dated to the 'Gonur phase'. The seal excavated in the Yahya IVA period was found in the area BW TT5-7 during the 1969 campaign, in the Second Building Level of the northern step trench of excavation. It is to be attributed to the same chronological time span, contemporary with the Takab III-I, Shah-r-i-Sokhta IV, Shorttugai III-IV

and Harappa 3C, in a period marked by the occupational shift of the Konar Sandal South settlement. Finally, the seal from Tôd (south of Luxor) was in a hoard found in the Mont temple foundations with an inscription of Amenemhat II (ca. 1929–1895 BC).

Iconographic and stylistic analysis support a later development of south-eastern Iranian glyptic art, unknown, however, in the Konar Sandal South excavations (Figure 3.1.6a-d). This group of seals seems to lose the richness of the previous period, with the scene now characterized by the opposition of two main personages with a scant presence of secondary icons. The figurative schematics are rigid, sterile, in some cases expressionless, with calibrated stereotyped figures. The new seals lack the descriptive vivacity of the Early period (see *Early South-Eastern Iranian production*). The main depiction reproduces two deities sitting cross legged, generally female, respectively winged and with ears of corn sprouting from the shoulders. The goddess with ears of corn<sup>8</sup> was depicted in the Early phase of production at Shahdad, while the winged female appears in more chaotic representations of the previous group at Yahya (found in the so-called 'Persian Gulf room' attributed to the IVB period of the site), Shahdad, Jalalabad and in a specimen of the Rabenou collection. Both deities seem to be depicted in the Gonur seal, where they are standing in front of a seated and horned divinity enclosed in the solar circle.

The Late phase of South-Eastern Iranian seals represents the last line of development of the eastern Iranian glyptic art. A wide crisis in eastern Iran seems to have put an end to the whole cultural complex as attested in south-eastern Iran after the IVA archaeological phase of the Tepe Yahya excavations, at Shahdad III-I in the Takab plain, in the Hilmand valley (after the end of IV period of Shah-r-i-Sokhta), at Miri Qalat IV (Makran coast), at Gonur South, Shorttugai IV and in the Indus civilisation.

#### Turanian<sup>9</sup> production (ca. 3500–1500 BC)

This production is known in the Elamite world by two seals found in Susiana and by a scanty presence in the western Iranian highland (Figure 3.1.6e). This group of seals, mostly in bronze, was evidently a specific production of the Oxus civilisation<sup>10</sup> and its neighbouring areas, represented by the Sistan valley and the Gorgan plain. Outside the main context of their production, these seals were sporadically found at Susa (2), Mari, Tepe Yahya (1 from IVB period), Konar Sandal (4), Bampur (1 from Bampur IV), Damin (2), Shah-i-Tump (1) and Mochenjo-daro (1), showing the penetrative force of the Oxus civilisation in foreign cultural contexts. Different evaluations have to be made for seals coming from Shahdad, Shah-r-i-Sokhta (mainly from II and III periods), Mundigak (1 from II-2, 2 from III-4, 4 from III-5, 34 from III-6 and 1 from IV-1 periods) and Tepe Hissar (12 from II and 11 from III periods). All of these sites can be placed within an indigenous cultural complex but with strong influences coming from the core of the Oxus civilisation.

#### Intercultural productions

One group of seals should be considered a separate typological class manifesting a confluence of different cultures. These 'intercultural' seals have heterogeneous styles,



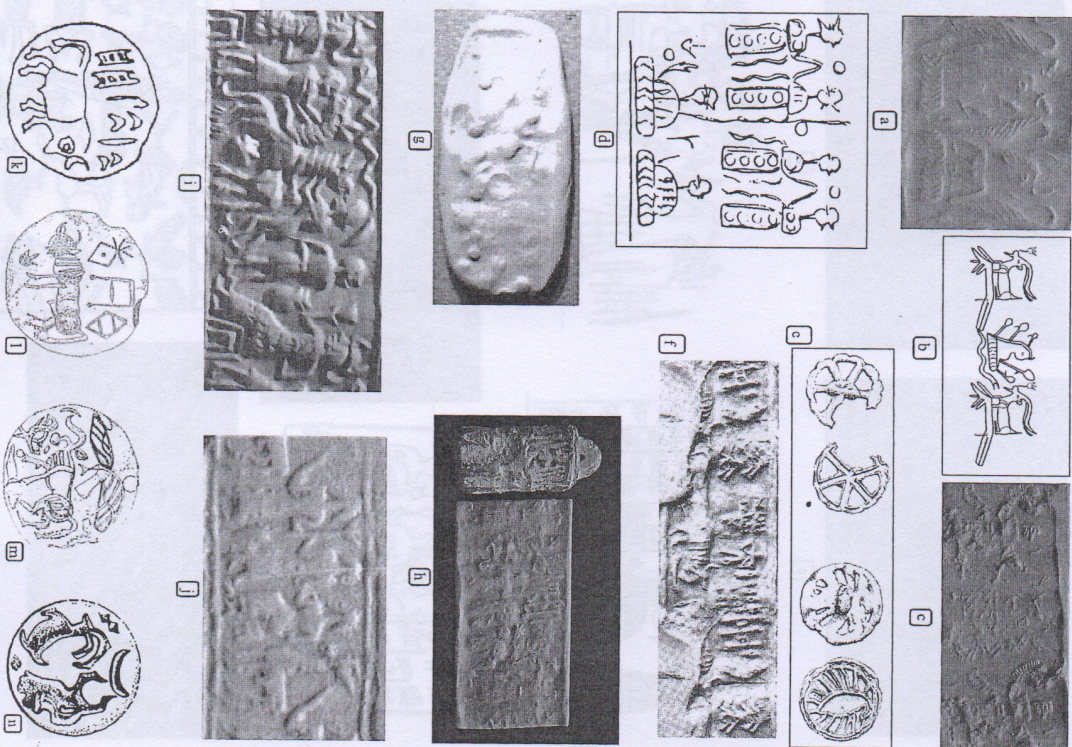


Figure 3.1.6 [a] Late South-Eastern Iranian seal from Tepe Yahya after Ascalone 2011: n. 4b.8; [b] Late South-Eastern Iranian seal from Gonur depe after Ascalone 2011: n. 4b.17; [c] Late South-Eastern Iranian seal from Susa after Ascalone 2011: n. 4b.19; [d] Late South-Eastern Iranian seal from Tod after Ascalone 2011: n. 4b.22; [e] Compartmented bronze stamp seals from Susa after Tallon 1987: nn. 1249–1250; [f] Pseudo-Indus cylinder seal from Susa Amiet 1972: n. 1643; [g] Pseudo-Indus cylinder seal from Konar Sandal South after Pittman 2013; [h] South-Eastern Iranian-Bactrian-Harappan handled stamp-cylinder seal from Jalalabad after Ascalone 2011: n. 6b; [i–j] Anshanite-Dilmunite cylinder seals from Susa after Ascalone 2011: nn. 8.1–2; [k–m] Elamite-Indus rounded stamp seals after Ascalone 2011: nn. 9.1–3; [n] Persian Gulf type seal from Tepe Yahya after Ascalone 2011: n. 13.1.

iconography and, sometimes, epigraphy. We can recognize in the highlands and lowlands of Iran the following intercultural specimens:

- Two pseudo-Indus cylinder seals (ca. 2200–2000 BC) (Figure 3.1.6f–g);
- One South-Eastern Iranian-Bactrian-Harappan handled stamp-cylinder seal (ca. 2300–2200 BC) (Figure 3.1.6h);
- Two Anshanite-Dilmunite cylinder seals (ca. 2000–1800 BC) (Figure 3.1.6i–j);
- Three Elamite-Indus rounded stamp seals (ca. 2200–2000 BC) (Figure 3.1.6k–m);
- One Persian Gulf type seal (ca. 2200–2000 BC) (Figure 3.1.6n);
- Three South-Eastern Iranian-Margiana seals or amulets (ca. 2100/2000–1900/1800 BC) (Figure 3.1.7a–c);
- Five South-Eastern Iranian-Margiana (handled) stamp seals (ca. 2200–2000/1900 BC) (Figure 3.1.7d–h);
- Six Anshanite-Dilmunite rounded stamp seals (ca. 2000–1800 BC) (Figure 3.1.7i–n).

These seals are the expression of cultural interactions on the Iranian plateau and its coastal areas during the end of the 3rd, and the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC. In particular, it seems possible to identify the role of the Elamite/Anshanite culture in the Persian Gulf glyptic production, generally considered a local manufacturing influenced by Mesopotamian workshops (see, for example, the Anshanite-Dilmunite cylinder seals from Susa). At the same time, they allow for a more substantial analysis of the Integrative Cultural System (ICS)<sup>11</sup> among the Indus, Oxus, Elamite and Jiroft civilizations between ca. 2500–1800 BC.

#### MIDDLE-ELAMITE PERIOD (CA. 1520–1100 BC)

The Sukkalmakh sovereigns were followed by the Middle-Elamite dynasties, the sequence of which forms the basis for a division of the period into three main phases. The first phase (ca. 1500–1400 BC) is notable for the foundation of Haft Tepe (ancient Kabnak) by Tepti-ahar; the second phase (ca. 1400–1200 BC) was marked by the foundation of a new urban complex at Choga Zanbil (Dur-Untash) by Untash-Napirisha, while the third and last phase (ca. 1200–1100 BC) saw the rise of Shurruk-Nakhunte, who subdued his western neighbours. Throughout this period Anshan and Susa provide wide evidence of occupation, as is attested in the archaeological finds of Tall-i-Malyan and in the archaeological sequence of the Susa VII and VIII periods.

In glyptic art, a change from the Old-Elamite productions is attested. A new strong stylization of figures and an enrichment of symbols and secondary elements are now documented. The main corpora of seals come from Haft Tepe<sup>12</sup> and Choga Zanbil,<sup>13</sup> two sites that are particularly meaningful owing to their limited chronological framework. At least five Middle-Elamite groups can be identified (Figure 3.1.8): (i) Middle-Elamite Early group (Middle-Elamite I); (ii) Miranian group (Middle-Elamite I-II); (iii) Middle-Elamite or Linear Style group (Middle-Elamite II-III); (iv) Middle-Assyrian group (Middle-Elamite II-III); (v) Pseudo-Kassite group (Middle-Elamite I-II).

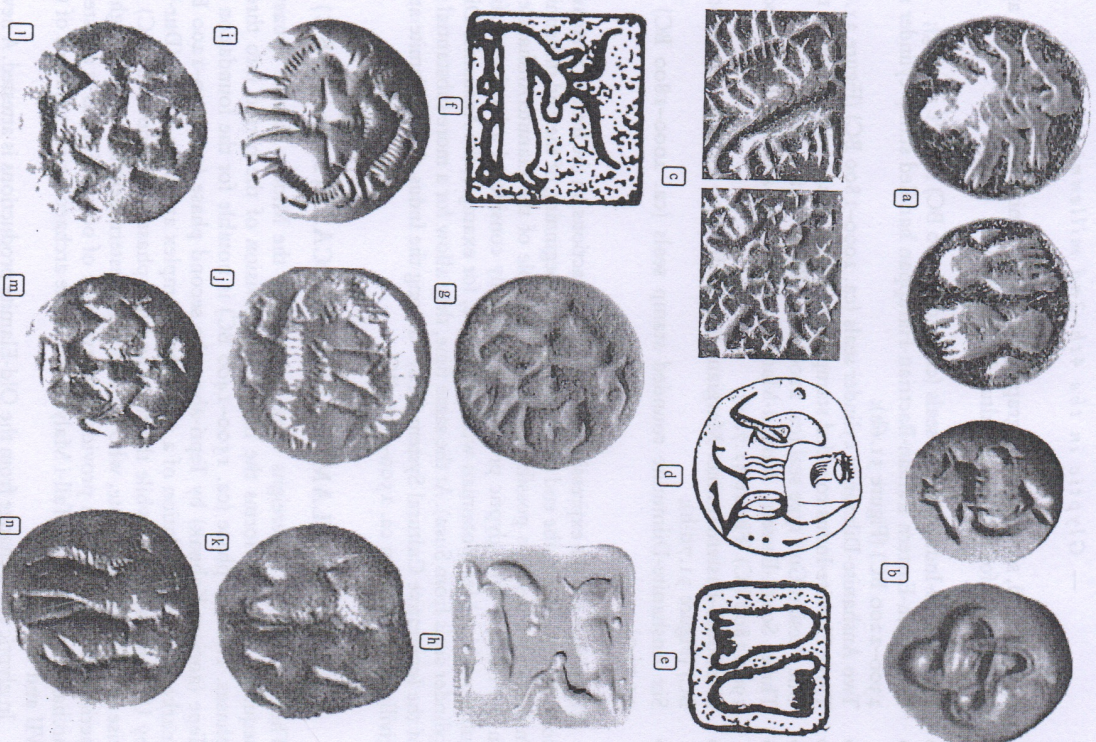


Figure 31.7 [a] South-Eastern Iranian-Margiana seal/annulet from Tepe Yahya after Ascalone 2011: n. 14.1; [b] South-Eastern Iranian-Margiana seal/annulet from Susa after Amiet 1972: n. 1721; [c] South-Eastern Iranian-Margiana seal/annulet from antiquary market after Ascalone 2011: n. 14.3; [d] South-Eastern Iranian-Margiana handled stamp seal from Tepe Yahya after Ascalone 2011: n. 10.1; [e-f] South-Eastern Iranian-Margiana handled stamp seals from Shahdad after Ascalone 2011: nn. 10.2-3; [g] South-Eastern Iranian-Margiana handled stamp seal from Tepe Giyan after Ascalone 2011: n. 10.4; [h] Konar Sandal seal from Trench V after Pittman 2013; Figure 4.7; [i-n] Anshanite-Dilmunite rounded stamp seals from Susa after Amiet 1972: nn. 1720, 1722-1726.

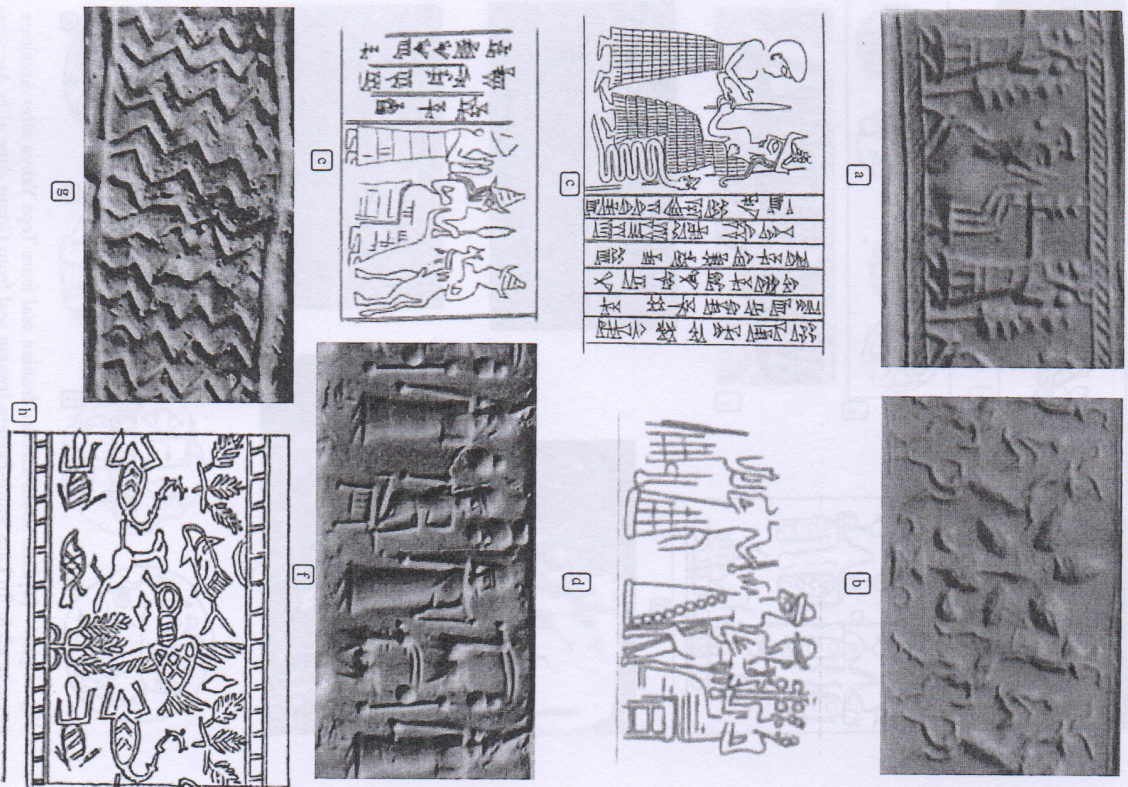


Figure 31.8 [a-b] Middle-Elamite seals from Susa after Amiet 1972: nn. 2120-2121; [c-e] Middle-Elamite sealings from Haft Tepe after Mofidi-Nasrabadi 2011: nn. 11, 32 and 126; [f-h] Middle-Elamite seal from Choga Zanbil after Porada 1970: nn. 112, 148 and 51.

The Early group appears close to the previous productions of Old-Elamite seals, as attested in the so-called *Wimirkegroup* of Seidl (1990: 129–135), where the main figurative aspects are the small size of the personages, a strong stylization of figures and a general increase of the number of icons. This specific production should be dated to the Early Middle-Elamite period, probably to its first historical phase (Middle-Elamite I). The same seals were found at Susa, Choga Zanbil, Nuzi and Surkh Dum-i-Luri in the Luristan province. Within the same chronological range should be dated the seal of Tepti-Ahar for its iconographic and stylistic relations with the earlier seals of the Old-Elamite III B period; documented in this seal is the presentation scene of the ruler before a god, presumably Napirisha, who holds a staff with globes, a specific motif that increased in importance from the Old-Babylonian period towards the end of the 17th century BC.

The so-called Mitannian style is documented in seals where the use of a fine drill is widely attested; the most commonly represented themes are the palmette tree flanked by two goats, and the god/king who receives a bottle and napkin from a female figure. The style follows a chaotic scheme in a volumetric expression, far removed from the previous period.

The Middle-Assyrian group is represented by several seals in which a hero with two goats (or an archer) is generally represented. The figurative apparatus remains lively, in a naturalistic context mostly represented by tall plants. The carving is careful with a deep incision in the surface of the seals. Middle-Assyrian related seals come also from Sorik Dum-i-Luri, and two were from Marlik, but few specimens were found at Susa.

The Kassite group shows a repetitive and standardized scene in which one, two or three standing figures of gods and worshippers are depicted, with an inscription that can fill most of the representation. The dating of this group should be limited to the Susa VIII period as well as a group of fine cylinders of blue glass that follow the characteristic Kassite scene, with the same carving, iconography and style. However, several seals, produced in the same material, should be considered a production very close to the Elamite figurative heritage: the scenes are mainly characterized by the presence of architectonic frames filled with fine criss-crossing and dot circles, and the depictions are usually enriched by volute trees and large birds or by an archer aiming at game.

Other Middle-Elamite seals are mainly made in faience, and unlike the categories described above, their designs were produced in a largely linear manner. The representations are of humans rather than gods, and the rows of animals and banquet scenes are often depicted in a wider thematic range. The most common motif, however, is the personage raising a cup in front of an attendant, a theme inserted in a representation where inscriptions and secondary iconographic elements (such as birds or unidentified animals) are added.

After the reign of the Shurrukid dynast Hureltutush-Inshushinak, it becomes difficult to follow Elamite history and culture until the late eighth century BC, when relations would be mainly with Assyria and much less with the Babylonian area.

Table. 31.1 Comparative analysis among areas, periods and classes of seal production

Date	Dynasty	Archaeological Phase	Period	Glyptic	Production
		(Susiana/Fars/SE Iran)		Susiana/Fars	South-East Iran
4000–3500		– Susa I – Late Bakun-Lapui – Yahya VI-VC	Susa A	Susa A	
3500–3100		– Susa II – Late Banesh – Yahya VB-VA	Susa B	Uruk	
3100–2700		– Susa III – Middle/Late Banesh – Yahya IVC – Mahtoutabad III	Proto-Elamite	Proto-Elamite	Proto-Elamite
2700–2300	Awan	– Susa IVA – Shrine Phase (Citadel, KSS) – Early Phase (Citadel, KSS) – Phases 2–3 (Lower Town, KSS) – Transition Banesh/Kaftari – Shahdad IV <sub>1</sub>	Early-Elamite	– ED II-III – Piedmont	Konar Sandal South
2300–2120	Awan	– Susa IVB-VA – Kaftari – Yahya IVB – Shahdad III <sub>2</sub>	Old-Elamite I	– Akkadian – Post-Akkadian – Piedmont	Early SE Iranian
2120–1920	Simashki	– Susa VB – Kaftari – Yahya IVA – Shahdad III <sub>1</sub> – Gonur Phase	Old-Elamite II	– Neo-Sumerian – Early Old-Elamite – Early Anshanite – Classic Anshanite	Late SE Iranian

(Continued)

Table 31.1 (Continued)

Date	Dynasty	Archaeological Phase	Period	Glyptic	Production
		(Susiana/Fars/SE Iran)		Susiana/Fars	South-East Iran
1920–1800	Sukkalmaḫ	– Susa VB – Kaftari – Yahya IVA	Old-Elamite IIIA	– Old-Babylonian – Trans. Old-Elamite – Classic Anshanite	
1800–1650	Sukkalmaḫ	Susa VI	Old-Elamite IIIB	– Old-Babylonian – Classic Old-Elamite – Late Anshanite	
1650–1520	Sukkalmaḫ	– Susa VI/VII – Early Qaleh	Old-Elamite IIIC	– Late Old-Elamite	
1520–1400	‘Kidinuids’	– Susa VII – Haft Tepe – Early Qaleh	Middle-Elamite I	– Early Middle-Elamite – Mitannian group – Pseudo-Kassite group	
1400–1200	‘Ighalkids’	– Susa VIII – Early/Late Qaleh – Choga Zanbil	Middle-Elamite II	– Middle-Assyrian group – Pseudo-Kassite group – Middle-Elamite group	
1200–1100	‘Shutrukids’	– Susa VIII – Late Qaleh	Middle-Elamite III	– Middle-Elamite group – Middle Assyrian group	

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> This period is known in the Lower Town (in phases 2–3), in the Citadel (Early and Shrine phases) and in the Mahtoutabad cemetery (III period).
- <sup>2</sup> On the chronological proposals see also Porada 1958: 66 and Matthews 1997: 146–147.
- <sup>3</sup> Lastly, H. Pitman (2001: 236) has preferred to call this group of seals ‘South Central Iranian Glyptic’.
- <sup>4</sup> Trench V, contrary to evidence collected in Trench III where the sealings seem to be earlier and belonging to the above Konar Sandal South group, gave back numerous creulæ found in a dump placed on the eastern flank of the fortifications between the Lower Town and the Citadel (Madjidzadeh 2008: 94–96).
- <sup>5</sup> In the absence of a peculiar trait for divinities, we should assume that the long (but not beyond the shoulders) and loose hair are generally specific to the goddess; on the contrary, the hair encased in a bun seems to be related to the faithful (see comparisons with the statues found at Shahdad); same absences are attested in the Anshanite seals (see *Anshanite production*).
- <sup>6</sup> This production, called ‘Anshanite’ in order to distinguish it from the contemporary Old-Elamite seals, is well represented at Susa where ca. 300 seals were found in the French excavations (see *Anshanite production*).
- <sup>7</sup> A group of specimens (seals and sealings) for style and iconography has to be considered a dynastic production in which the names of Ebarat, Atrahushu, Kuk-Kirmash and Kuk-Nashur appear in the inscriptions of seals.
- <sup>8</sup> The goddess must be the same as that depicted on the Rosen seal; she is represented on a throne inside the sun rising from the mountains bringing with it the arrival of springs, represented by the god with snakes protected by two unidentified mythological figures.
- <sup>9</sup> The terminology follows Tosi’s (1977: 47) historical evaluations on this area.
- <sup>10</sup> An overview of this class of production is in Baghestani 1997 and Salvatore 2000.
- <sup>11</sup> The so-called Middle Asian Interaction Sphere (MAIS) by Possehl (2002: 215–236) has been used in order to underline the interactive process between Indus valley and its neighbours, starting from a Harappan perspective (see also Pitman 2013). It is my belief that during the second half of 3rd millennium BC, more intensive and wider relations in an Integrated Cultural System were between the South-East Iranian regions and the Oxus civilisation, in which the Indus valley played a role only in a well-structured commercial system. However, the evidence of an integrated system of thoughts and knowledge should be identified between Margiana and Kerman province (Ascalone 2014).
- <sup>12</sup> The corpus from Haft Tepe has been divided into seven main groups, in which have been identified Babylonian, Elamite-Babylonian (or Susian-Elamite), Kassite and Mitannian productions (Mohfi-Nasrabadi 2011).
- <sup>13</sup> Following an iconographic approach, E. Porada (1970) identified ten stylistic groups in the corpus of Choga Zanbil.

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