Female solar deities


Noteworthy sun goddesses of the 2nd mill. are Shepesh (→Shemesh/Shepesh) at Ugarit (CAQUOT 1959), and the “Sun goddess of Arinna” in Syro-Anatolia who was later also identified with the Syrian goddess →Hebat (HAAS 1994: 386; for other sun goddesses of Hittite Anatolia see also § IV and IDD 1/1: figs. 1-2, 5).

In Northwest Semitic literature of the 1st mill. sun goddesses are not attested (however, cf. reminiscences of the personified female sun as guard of truth as, e.g., in 2 Sam 12:11: ‘ʁ̣e‘ē̗n hāṣšēmɛš hāẓ̣̣̣attr “before the eyes of this sun” [fem.]; HARTMANN 1976: 994). This literary silence stands in contrast to the pictorial testimony of the same period, which indicates that the female solar deity was still well known. This iconographic evidence will be discussed below.

II. Typology

II.1. Phenotypes

1. WINGED SUN DISC AS BODY 1.1. Lotus flower in either hand (1*-6). No object in hands (7-43).

2. WINGED ANTHROPOMORPHIC BODY 2.1. Palmettes in either hand (44) 2.2. Lifting up a chariot (45-46).

2.3. No object in hands (47-49).

3. ANTHROPOMORPHIC BODY (50) 4. Bird as body and bird-like body (51-52).

5. SCARAB AS BODY (53-58).

1. WINGED SUN DISC AS BODY

1.1. Lotus flower in either hand.

On several North Syrian ivory chair-back panels from Room SW 7 of Fort Shalmaneser at Nimrud, the upper register depicts a sun disc with horizontally fanned-out wings, which is surmounted by a female torso (1*-6). The en face represented chubby face is framed by double →Hathor-like hair curls and fringes on the forehead. From the double locks the arms, decorated with bracelets, extend horizontally and rest along the top of the wings, each hand holding a lotus flower.

The frontal representation may be related to the Henkelattaschen (see § 1.2, III.1.). However, Urartian fan-shaped chariot yoke standards from about 825-810 already depict a male solar god-in-the-winged-and-tailed-ring (→Figure in winged disc) in full-face view (MAASS 1987: pls. 4-5).

The beaded sun disc of 1* is likewise related to the same iconographic tradition, since it is regularly used for the god-in-the-winged-and-tailed-ring on Urartian chariot fittings and horse trappings (MERHAV 1991: 53-109; for an occurrence on arm guards (?) see MERHAV 1991: 121, no. 6; for an ivory horse frontlet from Gordion see YOUNG 1962: pl. 46:24 = PRAYON 1987: 184f fig. 30; for an orthostate from Karatepe see AKURGAL 1961: pl. 149; ÇAMBEL/ÖZVAR 2003: pl. 27; furthermore, see also an ivory winged sun disc, possibly from Nimrud, in BARNETT 1957: pl. 123 V 12).

The solar god on the yoke standards mentioned above is furthermore related to the Nimrud ivories since the outstretched arms also hold a floral element (i.e., branches with pomegranates; see BARNETT 1975: pl. 14), a feature which is also characteristic of the winged goddess on the Tridacna shells of Group I (see § 2.1).

1.2. No object in hands. Numerous bronze attachments or so-called Henkelattaschen, which are placed on the rim of cauldrons, have the shape of a winged and tailed female torso whose outstretched arms rest on the outspread wings. The overall iconographic design of the Oriental type (for the Greek version see HERRMANN 1966: 90-113; MUSCARELLA 1992: 20f), which originates from the Syro-Anatolian border region (MUSCARELLA 1992: 21f; HERRMANN 1966: 59-67) but was found in Assyria, Urartu, Phrygia, Greece, and Italy (7*-43; for unpublished and/or unprovenanced pieces of the female type see HERRMANN 1966: 56-58, nos. 7-9, 37, 45-48, 58-59, 62-63; p. 186 inv. No. 6105), is related to the female solar deity of the Nimrud ivories. Particular solar features are the semicircle to which the wings are attached and, on some examples, the remains of the volutes of the Anatolian sun disc (11-12, 22 with AKURGAL 1961: pl. 134).

2. WINGED ANTHROPOMORPHIC BODY

2.1. Palmettes in either hand. Engraved Tridacna shells, produced in Middle or Southern Syria but recovered from Mesopotamia to Italy, have already been referred to by MALLOWAN (1966: II 496) as parallels for the solar deity of the Nimrud ivories (1*-6). Shells of Group I (STUCKY 1974: 19f) show the winged female deity with her outstretched arms holding two palmettes in either hand (44*; for fragments of Group I type shells see STUCKY 1974: nos. 5-6, 46, 55, 61, 78-79, 81, 87). In the case of the Tridacna shells of Group I the solar nature of the goddess is not indicated by a particular solar feature but by a general affinity to the solar goddess of the Nimrud
ivories (1*-6), with her outspread wings and arms holding a floral element.

2.2. Lifting up a chariot. A second parallel to the solar deity of the Nimrud ivories cited by MALLOWAN (1966: II 496) is a Phoenician silver bowl from the Bernardini tomb at Praeneste in Etruria (45*). A silver bowl from Kourion (46) displays the same hunting episode in the outer register as 45*. After shooting and flaying a stag, the royal hunter is depicted in scene no. 5 as making an offering in the presence of the winged sun disc. The following episode shows how the royal hunter, under attack by a →monkey, is rescued by a winged female deity by lifting him up in his chariot. Apart from the winged female torso, two aspects related to representations of solar deities: the Hathor-like hairstyle (see 1*, 51*-52*; for the identical hairstyle as 46 with bundled hair see the Hathoric head surmounted by a winged sun disc on bronze plaques, placed below bull attachments on a cauldron from Salamis found together with 51* [KARAGEORGHS 1973: 112; fig. 28, pl. 243]); and the close association of the chariot and horse with the solar deity as known from Urartian chariot fittings and horse trappings (see § 1.1, IV).

2.3. No objects in hand. On Triadan shells of Group II (STUCKY 1974: 20 fig. 5) the winged goddess’s solar affinity is likewise not indicated by iconographic markers of her own but rather hinted at by the torso of a sun god in a lotus nimbus engraved on the exterior of the shell (47*-49); for shell fragments of Group II see STUCKY 1974: nos. 2-3, 7, 12-13, 15-20, 22, 25 [restored: BRANDL 1984: 77 fig. 1 = KEEL/UEHLINGER 1998: 346 fig. 337a], 28-32, 34, 36, 38-41, 43-45, 47-54, 56-60, 62-67, 69-72, 74-76, 80, 82, 86a, 89-90; GEVA 1980: 42 fig. 1-2). The solar nature of this male deity is indicated by the central medallion that is related to Syro-Anatolian solar symbolism; and corroborated by the middle ring of the nimbus, consisting of plain and cross-hatched triangles. The same pattern in varied execution also decorates the semicircle-shaped solar disc of the Henkelat-taschen, as well as the dress of their winged solar deities (STUCKY 1974: 61f).

The combination of a female and male solar deity reminds of the Anatolian divine solar system, which has solar deities of both sexes whose roles are not always clearly separated (see fem. Hattic Eštan > masc. Hitt. Ištana and the sexual ambivalence of the Hattic-Hittite sun deity, which resulted in the substitution of the male Ištana(s) by the female UTU ARINNA; see FAUTH 1979: 241f).

3. ANTHROPOMORPHIC BODY. In contrast to the above phenotypes, a different compositional concept is involved on an alabastron from the Isis tomb at Vulci, Etruria (suggested locations for the workshop are Cyprus, Phoenicia, North Syria, Naukratis or Rhodes [PRAYON 1987: 189]). Here a female is carrying a winged sun disc (50*). The latter is no longer an integral part of the solar goddess but is reduced to an object held by the deity (for female solar deities from Hittite Anatolia carrying a halo resembling the sun disc see IDD I/1: figs. 1-2).

In a similar pose, a male solar deity is carrying a sun disc on a 6th cent. Orientalizing Archaic Greek scarab from Cyprus (BOARDMAN 1968: pl. 3:40; see also 3:41) and on coins of Mallos in Cilicia dating to c. 425-385 (e.g., HILL 1900: cxx, pls. 16: 8-13; 40:9; see also BOARDMAN 1968: 32f). For a possible connection of these representations to 6th cent. Phoenician female terracotta figurines from Punic sites holding a disc (votive bread, sun, moon?) in front of them see HÖBL 1979: I 360; KILLAN 1970: 206-208.

4. BIRD AS BODY AND BIRD-LIKE BODY. The winged Hathoric torso depicted on an equestrian pendant shoulder ornament from Salamis (51*) is iconographically related to the winged female deity on Phoenician silver bowls (45*-46). The torso hovers over a nude →Mistress-of-animals who stands on two →lions. However, in contrast to 45*-46 the upper body is also represented, including legs of birds well known from depictions of the winged sun disc. Related to this representation is the winged deity with Hathoric hairdress of the Bomford equestrian frontlet (52*). In this case the bird’s legs rest on the head of the nude deity who is standing on a lion’s head (somewhat similar to Hittite deities, which carry the sun disc on their head: e.g., AKURGAL 1961: pls. 104 above; BITTEL 1975: pl. 22:1); the body is clearly indicated as that of a bird (see the related motif with a plain sun disc above the naked goddess on a North Syrian ivory horse frontlet from Gordion [YOUNG 1962: pl. 46:24; PRAYON 1987: 184f fig. 30], and southern Syrian types from Nimrud [BARNETT 1957: pl. 63 S 146; BARNETT 1966: II 538f fig. 458; 582 fig. 549; ORCHARD 1967: pls. 28:135; 31:147]).

5. SCARAB AS BODY. The representation of the female solar deity, which derives from the Egyptian solar symbolism, differs from these examples. In this case the →scarab beetle forms the body of the goddess, which is surmounted by the anthropomorphic torso, a construction related to 1*.
7*, 45*, and 51*-52*. Two different iconographic types can be distinguished: either the raised arms of the deity support a triple atef crown as on a Phoenician silver bowl (53*) and a Nimrud ivory panel (54*), or they uphold a sun disc as on stamp seals (55*-56) and jewelry (57-58; contra LANCEL: the bracelet LANCEL 1991: 974, fig. 3b with missing surmounted head is hardly made by the same model as 57 and cannot be conjectured to be the same type as 57-58 due to its fragmentary state). The two-winged scarab (54*) is characteristic of the early type, in comparison to the four-winged type that occurs later (53*, 55*-58).

II.2. Standard associations

1. ASSOCIATED WITH DEITIES/DEMONS
1.1. Male solar deity. On cauldron MM 3 from Gordion, two female winged Henkelattaschen (13-14) are combined with two similar bearded winged protomes, as they occur elsewhere on cauldrons (see HERRMANN 1966: 30f, nos. A 1-A 5, 58 nos. 58-59).

The joint appearance of a female and male solar deity is also typical of the Tridacna shells of Group II, which show on the exterior of the shell a male solar deity in a lotus nimbus (47*-49).

1.2. Naked goddess. The bird-like female solar deity appears in two examples on equestrian harness, hovering above or perching on the head of a naked goddess (see MARINATOS 2000: 18-27) who is standing on two lions or a lion’s head (51*-52*).

1.3. Heh. The anthropomorphic scarab traveling in a solar barque on the Phoenician silver bowl 53* is flanked by two kneeling male figures wearing the crown of Upper and Lower Egypt. The feather they hold suggests that they represent the god of infinity, Heh, who belongs to the sphere of the sun god.

2. ASSOCIATED WITH ANIMALS
2.1. Horse. The sun goddess is indirectly associated with the horse by the equestrian harness on which she is depicted (51*-52*), a relationship which is particularly significant in regard to the female solar deity on Phoenician metal bowls. Here she is shown saving the royal hunter by lifting him up with his chariot and horse (45*-46).

3. ASSOCIATED WITH HUMANS
3.1. Men performing and musicians involved in a tree ritual. Below the female winged sun disc of the Nimrud ivories, men wearing “flowerpot” helmets are depicted grasping the tendrils of a tree (1*-5). Due to their armor-like dress and their helmets they have been compared to warriors (MALLOWAN/HERRMANN 1974: 9). However, it is not clear whether these figures should be considered as simply human. They may well be divine beings performing a tree ritual.

The interior of the Tridacna shells of Group I (44*) depicts a central palm tree between two outward-facing protecting sphinxes, flanked on either side by a group of musicians with a kneeling figure holding lotus tendrils in their midst.

3.2. Men performing an act of alliance. Among the “flowerpot”-helmet group of the SW 7 ivories, two figures appear side by side, holding each other by the wrist in an act of alliance (6).

III. Sources

III.1. Chronological range. The early Late Hittite Henkelattaschen (7*, 9-23) and the SW 7 ivories (1*-6) are contemporary, since they both have close parallels to the Zinjirli and Sacke Gözu reliefs (HERRMANN 1966: 65f; WINTER 1976: 52). WINTER (1976: 52; HERRMANN 1986: 49) dated the ivories to 740-730, which corresponds with HERRMANN’s (1966: 87) conclusion that the production of the early late Hittite Henkelattaschen must have started at the latest around 725, if not somewhat earlier. Since the Assyrianizing Henkelattasche 8 is considered to be a predecessor of the early late Hittite group (HERRMANN 1966: 70f), its terminus ante quem will be around the middle of the 8th cent. The North Syrian-influenced horse frontlets 51*-52* in the last quarter of the 8th cent. give way to the Southern Syrian/Phoenician solar tradition, exemplified by the SW 37 ivory panel 54*. The new Egyptianizing Phoenician solar metaphor was soon adopted into different media. Around the turn of the century it appears on a silver bowl 53, and in the 7th-mid-6th cent. on stamp seals (55*-56). In the 6th-5th cent. it was finally adopted on jewelry (57-58).

At the same time that the anthropomorphic winged scarab motif began to proliferate, the North Syrian tradition of the anthropomorphic winged sun disc reappears on the Phoenician silver bowls 45*-46 (on the Assyrian influence see MARKOE 1985: 8, 67), and from 675-600 on Tridacna shells (44*, 48*). A possible late development of the North Syrian female solar tradition is the

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sun disc carrying anthropomorphic alabastron 50*, dated to around 600.

III.2. Geographical distribution. Most objects under discussion were not recovered at their production centers but ended up as exports throughout the Mediterranean, as far as Italy in the west and Babylon in the east (see the Tridacna shell fragments mentioned in § II.1.2.1). Known exports to Palestine/Israel are Tridacna shell 47* and scaraboid 55*. Others, such as ivories 1* - 6 and 54*, were taken as booty to Mesopotamia.

Three main production regions have been identified: First, Northern Syria in regard to the Henkelattaschen and the SW 7 Nimrud ivories (1* - 37, 39, 41, 43), and probably the horse trappings 51* - 52* as well. Second, Middle or Southern Syria (STUCKY 1974: 103) for the Tridacna shells (44*, 47*-49) and Southern Syria (or possibly Samaria?; see HERRMANN 1986: 52) for the ivory horse frontlet 54*. Third, a Phoenician production is attributed to silver bowls (45*-46, 53*), stamp seals (55*-56), and jewelry (57-58).

Some Phoenician items allow a closer localization of their production center. In the case of 45*-46 a Phoenician workshop in Cyprus is most likely. Bowl 53 may have been produced in Cyprus or by a local Phoenician in Etruria, Italy, following the Cypro-Phoenician tradition (MARKOE 1985: 147). The stamp seal 55* was probably produced in Phoenicia and exported to Palestine/Israel where its inscription was added (see UEHLINGER 1993: 276). Anepigraphic scarab 56, with the same motif as 55*, is of local Cypriote serpentine tradition.

The production center of alabastron 50 is disputed (see § II.1.3), but a Cypro-Phoenician or Syrian attribution seems most likely.

III.3. Object types. In the North Syrian tradition the female solar deity appears as bronze attachments on cauldrons (8*-37, 39, 41, 43); decorative ivory panels of chairs (1* - 7), possibly serving in a cultic setting; and bronze horse trappings (51* - 52*). The ivory panel 54* (of so far unknown function) and Tridacna shells 44*, 47*-49 belong to the Middle/South Syrian tradition. Object types relating to the Phoenician tradition comprise silver bowls (45*-46, 53*), stamp seals (55*-56), and jewelry (57-58). Of singular occurrence is alabastron 50.

IV. Conclusion. The composite construction of an anthropomorphic torso with a sun disc is of Assyrian origin and first attested on a glazed brick fragment (ANEP No. 536) from the time of Tukulti-Ninurta II (890-884). Winged vessel attachments appear on buckets held by divine beings performing the pollination rite of the sacred tree (see, e.g., STEARNS 1961: pls. 14, 59), which is depicted on relief orthostates in the palace of Ashurnasirpal II (883-859). The same theme was also adopted in late Hittite art (e.g., AKURGAL 1961: pl. 134). The Assyrianizing cauldron attachment 8, dated to c. 750 (terminus ante quem), represents the earliest female adaptation of this concept and is the “prototype” for the early female Hittite Henkelattaschen (7*, 9-23).

The representation of the solar deity as female in the Syro-Anatolian region corresponds well with the female gender of the solar deity in many Northwest Semitic languages (see § I). In Central Anatolia the female solar deity can be traced back to the Hittite sun goddess Eštar. Among the many local city sun goddesses of this region, the earth-goddess Urunzimu/Wurunšemu of Arinna, later also known as “Sun goddess of Arinna” (see also Ug. špsʾ arz; KTU 3.1.19) who was represented by votive discs (šittar) (see RIECHSCHNEIDER 1961: pl. 108; HAAS 1994: 424f), served from Ḫattušili I (1565-1540) as supreme goddess of the Hittite pantheon. She was gradually replaced by the Hurrite male sun god Simige, who is represented in the mid-13th cent. at the open-air rock sanctuary of Yazılıkaya (HAAS 1994: 379, 420-425).

However, despite the long-standing local tradition which equates the female solar deity with the “Sun goddess of Arinna,” it is problematic to identify iconographic representations, as is frequently done with the Nimrud ivories (1* - 6), for example, with this particular deity or its Ugaritic pendant Shepesh, whose literary attestation is 450-650 years older. Because of the lack of literally attested 1st mill. female solar deities, it seems more prudent to establish the function and character of the iconographically discussed female sun goddesses than to name them.

In regard to the Henkelattaschen such a definition is hampered by the iconographic isolation of the object. The bearded type, which occurs sometimes together with the female type (14-15), does not add significantly more information. Neither do cauldrons with additional lion and griffin protomes (22-23, 36-37), as they are a later addition to the cauldrons after they were exported to the west (HERRMANN 1966: 148). However, the use of cauldrons with Henkelattaschen as funerary equipment in the royal tomb of the Phrygian king Midas and the Etruscan tombs of members of a warrior aristocracy is noteworthy when...
compared to the cauldrons from Greece (20-21, 24-35, 38-43) being used in temples.

The female solar deity on the SW 7 ivories (1•-7) is closely related to the early Henkelattaschen since they share stylistic features related to the iconographic tradition of Zinjirli and Sakçe Gözü during the time of Tiglath-Pileser III (744-727) (see § III.1). Expanded information on the solar goddess of the SW 7 ivories is provided by iconographic features and their iconographic context. The lotus flower, symbol of regeneration, held by the sun goddess of the Nimrud ivories blends well with the “program” of the SW 7 ivories with its tree rituals in the presence of the sun goddess (Winter 1976: 45), particularly since the local female solar tradition of the region is strongly connected with the life-giving earth. Urunzim, the Hittite name of the “Sun goddess of Aranna,” has been interpreted as “mother of the earth” (Klinger 1992: 127f; Haas 1994: 421). Furthermore, in contrast to the male celestial sun god, the solar characteristics of the “Sun goddess of Aranna” are blurred and superimposed by distinct telluric-facundative characteristics as well as regal ones (Faith 1979: 239). Against this background the Hathor-like hairstyle is particularly apt, since this Egyptian deity is associated with the sun and has life-giving and sustaining capacities (see DDD 385).

Winter (1976: 49 with n. 96) suggested that the simple sun disc with Hathor curls on the SW 7 ivories is an abbreviated form of the female torso with Hathor hairstyle (1•). However, the presentation of all iconographic evidence of similar Hittite sun discs dating back to the Old Hittite kingdom does not sustain such an assertion (see, e.g., the sun disc with volutes of royal Hittite cartouches, which stands for the royal appellative ḫUTUŠI “My Sun,” which relates to the male celestial sun).

The female solar deity with a Hathor hairstyle is particularly associated with horses and chariots (51•-52•, 45•-46•). Markoe pointed out that the silver bows 45•-46 belonged to a “cultural tradition known as a ‘warrior aristocracy’” (1985: 79, 84-86), due to the horse and chariot burials associated with them. It is worth noting that among the grave goods associated with 45• was the cauldron with Henkelattaschen 22-23.

The North Syrian tradition of the sun goddess thus attributes properties which are of life-sustaining and protecting as well as regenerative nature.

Closely related is the use of the Tridacna shells (44•, 48) as containers for makeup (Stucky 1974: 96-99), which had not only a rejuvenating purpose but was also of regenerative nature due to its association with the Eye of —Horus (Müller 1984: 665).

The female solar deity related to the Egyptian symbol system accentuates the rising or youthful sun. Panel 54• expresses this notion by means of the —scarab beetle and by its overall composition, which is close to that of —Harpocrates, a symbol for rejuvenation and fertility, sitting on a lotus flower —(Harpocrates 189•). On 53• the barque opposite the female solar deity again shows Harpocrates, this time flanking a four-winged scarab, and in the upper barque —Osiris, who was vital to the deceased’s after-life (DDD 650).
Iconography of Deities and Demons: Electronic Pre-Publication

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pendant ornament, bronze, 29.5 (d) cm; total height: 58 cm, Salamis, 725-700. Present location, inv. no. KARAGEORGIS 1973: 21-23 nos. 155+162, 83f, pls. 84 left; 272:155 52* Horse frontlet, bronze, c. 17 x 24 cm, 725-700. Present location, inv. no. BARNETT 1964: 23 fig. 1, pl. 2:2; 3:1-2; 4:1 53* Bowl, silver, 19 x 3.5 cm, Praeneste, 710-675. Rome, Museo di Villa Giulia, no. 61574. BÖHMER 1979: I 297, fig. 4; II pl. 161a; MARKOE 1985: 188-191 no. E1, 274-277; *MOSCATI 1966: 484, fig. 23 54* Panel, ivory, Nimrud, 725-700. Present location, inv. no. HERRMANN 1986: 234 no. 1265, pl. 329:1265; *GUBEL 1993: 123 fig. 63 55* Scaraboid, dark grey stone (lapis lazuli?), 17 x 12 x 7 mm, 700. Péronne, Musée Municipal, collection Danicourt. LEMAIRE/SASS 1996: 30-32, no. 2, fig. 2; *AVRAOU/SASS 1997: no. 103 56 Scarab, “green steatite”, Cyprus, 625-550. VOLLENWEIDER 1967: 119, pl. 61:8, 16-11; RÉVES 2001: 118 fig. 281 57 Diadem plaque, silver, Byrsa (Carthage), 600-575. LANCEL 1991: 972, fig. 2a-e 58 Diadem plaque, silver, Douîmes (Carthage), 600-575. LANCEL 1991: 974, fig. 3a

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