

RENATE MARIAN VAN DIJK-COOMBES

The Standards of
Mesopotamia in the
Third and Fourth
Millennia BCE

*Orientalische
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Mohr Siebeck

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Renate Marian van Dijk-Coombes

The Standards of Mesopotamia
in the Third and Fourth
Millennia BCE

An Iconographic Study

Mohr Siebeck

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Printed in Germany.

For my mother

Preface

This book is a revised version of my PhD dissertation, which was obtained from the University of Stellenbosch in 2016 under the supervision of Prof. Izak (Sakkie) Cornelius. The revisions were completed at North-West University in the Research Focus Area: Ancient Texts: Text, Context and Reception of the Faculty of Theology during a postdoctoral research fellowship with Prof. Gideon R. Kotzé.

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Potchefstroom, September 2021

Renate Marian van Dijk-Coombes

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List of Abbreviations

ÄAT	Ägypten und Altes Testament
ADFU	Ausgrabungen der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft in Uruk-Warka
AfO	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
AHw	Von Soden, <i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</i>
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AJSL	<i>American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures</i>
ALASPM	Abhandlungen zur Literatur Alt-Syrien-Palästinas und Mesopotamiens
AnOr	<i>Analecta Orientalia</i>
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AoF	<i>Altorientalische Forschungen</i>
AOS	American Oriental Series
AS	Assyriological Studies
ATU	<i>Archaische Texte aus Uruk</i>
AuOr	<i>Aula Orientalis</i>
AUWE	Ausgrabungen in Uru-Warka Endberichte
AVO	Altertumskunde des Vorderen Orients
BaF	Baghdader Forschungen
BaM	<i>Baghdader Mitteilungen</i>
BAR	Biblical Archaeology Review
BiOr	<i>Bibliotheca Orientalis</i>
CAD	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i>
CDA	<i>Concise Dictionary of Akkadian</i>
CDOG	Colloquien der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft
CM	Cuneiform Monographs
CPOA	Civilizations du Proche-Orient
CUSAS	Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology
ePSD	<i>The Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary Project</i>
ETCSL	<i>Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature</i>
FAOS	Freiburger altorientalische Studien
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
HANES	History of the Ancient Near East Studies
IDD	<i>Iconography of Deities and Demons in the Ancient Near East</i>
IEJ	<i>Israel Exploration Journal</i>
JANER	<i>Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions</i>
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
JEOL	<i>Jaarbericht van het Voor-Aziatisch-Egyptisch-Gezelschap Ex Oriente Lux</i>
JRAS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JNSL	<i>Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages</i>
JSem	<i>Journal for Semitics</i>
MAM	Misson Archéologique de Mari

MDP	Mémoires de la Délégation en Perse
MSVO	Materialien zu den frühen Schriftzeugnissen des Vorderen Orients
NATCP	The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project
OAC	Orientalis Antiqui Collection
OBC	Orientalia Biblica et Christiana
OBO	Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis
OIC	Oriental Institute Communications
OIS	Oriental Institute Seminars
OIP	Oriental Institute Publications
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
<i>OrNs</i>	<i>Orientalia (Nova Series)</i>
PBF	Prähistorische Bronzefunde
PBS	Publications of the Babylonian Section (of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania)
<i>Quad. Sem.</i>	Quaderni di Semitistica
PIHANS	Publications de l'Institut historique et archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul
<i>RA</i>	<i>Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale</i>
RIM	Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia
RIME	Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods
<i>RIA</i>	<i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie</i>
SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SAACT	State Archives of Assyria Cuneiform Texts
SAOC	Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization
SIS	Seal Impression Strata (Ur)
UAVA	Untersuchungen zur Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie
UE	Ur Excavations
<i>UVB</i>	<i>Uruk vorläufiger Bericht</i>
<i>WdO</i>	<i>Die Welt des Orients</i>
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
WVDOG	Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft
WZKM	Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes
ZA	Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie

Chapter 1

General Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Standards are found in the visual or iconographic record of Mesopotamia from the Uruk Period in the fourth millennium BCE until the first millennium BCE. Considering their prevalence and this long history, surprisingly little research has been done into the standards of the earlier periods.¹ This study will discuss the iconographic evidence for standards in Mesopotamia during the third and fourth millennia BCE.

The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary defines a standard as “a flag or figurehead attached to the upper part of a pole and raised to indicate a rallying-point; the distinctive ensign of a sovereign, commander, nation, etc.; of an army”.² This modern definition, however, may not correctly or adequately describe the standard in its ancient Mesopotamian context. Seidl’s definition of a standard as a “Stange mit daran befestigtem Zeichen, die aufgestellt oder getragen werden kann”³ differs from that of the Shorter Oxford Dictionary in that, while the latter identifies only the “flag or figurehead” surmounting the pole as the standard, Seidl accepts this to be part of the standard. Similarly, Szarzyńska identifies standards as “high shafts with various emblems on their tops, and in the majority of cases, with a kind of ‘fringe’ hung at the bottom of the emblems”.⁴ Pongratz-Leisten similarly identifies standards as consisting of a pole, a ‘top’, or an emblem, which was usually made or plated with a precious metal or stone, and tassels which were tied at the base of the emblem.⁵ Szarzyńska and Pongratz-Leisten therefore both identify three components of a standard: [1] a high shaft, sometimes with a pointed lower end to drive the standard into the ground, [2] an emblem attached to the top of the shaft, and [3] streamers, tassels or fringes which hang from the top of the standard and which were probably the ends of the binding which secured the emblem to the shaft.⁶

The Shorter Oxford Dictionary therefore defines a standard as the “flag or figurehead”, or the emblem, which surmounts the pole, while Seidl, Szarzyńska and Pongratz-Leisten identify this as only a part of the standard. This difference is reflected in van Buren’s distinguishing between ‘emblems’ and ‘standards’, defining an ‘em-

¹ See below 1.3. for previous studies on Mesopotamian standards.

² BROWN 2002, 3000.

³ SEIDL 2011–2013a, 111.

⁴ SZARZYŃSKA 1993, 17 n. 9.

⁵ PONGRATZ-LEISTEN 2011–2013, 107.

⁶ PONGRATZ-LEISTEN 2011–2013, 107; SZARZYŃSKA 1996, 1.

blem' as a "symbol which has been put into material form" and a 'standard' as an emblem which has been "mounted on a long shaft" in order for it to be set up or moved.⁷

This may be reflected in the Sumerian and Akkadian terms for standard, and the modern translations of these terms. The Sumerian terms for standard are **šu-nir** and **ùri(-gal)**, and the Akkadian terms are *šurinnu/šunirru*, *urigallu*, *urinnu* and *ithuru*.⁸ During the period under discussion in the present work, the third and fourth millennia, it is predominantly the Sumerian terms which were in use.⁹ The Sumerian **šu-nir** is translated by the *ePSD* as "emblem",¹⁰ and by Attinger in his *Lexique sumérien-français* as "emblème",¹¹ while **urin (ùri)** is translated by the *ePSD* as "standard",¹² and by Attinger in the *Lexique sumérien-français* as "étendard, bannière".¹³ The Akkadian *šurinnu* is translated by the *ePSD* as "(divine) emblem", by the *CAD* as "(divine) emblem, standard",¹⁴ by the *CDA* as "(divine) emblem",¹⁵ and by the *AHW* as "(Gottes-)Emblem".¹⁶ *Urinnu* is translated by the *ePSD* and the *CDA* as "standard",¹⁷ by the *CAD* as "standard, staff",¹⁸ and by the *AHW* as "eine Standarte".¹⁹ *Urigallu*, fairly similarly, is translated by the *CAD* as "1. (divine) standard (shaft upon which a divine emblem is placed), 2. staff, 3. reed bundles, reed enclosure",²⁰ by the *CDA* as "standard, symbol; hut with standards",²¹ and by the *AHW* as "Standarte; Hütte mit St."²²

According to van Buren, **šu-nir** or *šurinnu* was the "generic name for symbols of every description, whether unmounted or mounted on standards",²³ an understanding which fits well with 'emblem.' However, the translations of the Sumerian and Akkadian terms are not used consistently in modern-day translations of texts. For example,

⁷ VAN BUREN 1945, 1.

⁸ PONGRATZ-LEISTEN 1992; 2011–2013, 106; VAN BUREN 1945, 1. The last term, *ithuru*, was only used from the Middle Assyrian Period onwards, PONGRATZ-LEISTEN 2011, 106.

⁹ According to the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary (CAD)*, the Akkadian *šurinnu* is first attested during the Old Akkadian Period in the third millennium BCE, but *urigallu* and *urinnu* are only attested from the second millennium BCE, *CAD* 17 III, 344; *CAD* 20, 223, 227.

¹⁰ *ePSD*: **šunir**.

¹¹ ATTINGER 2019, 185.

¹² *ePSD*: **urin**.

¹³ ATTINGER 2019, 210.

¹⁴ *CAD* 17 III, 344.

¹⁵ BLACK, GEORGE and POSTGATE 2000, 387.

¹⁶ VON SODEN 1965–1981, 1283.

¹⁷ *ePSD*: **urin**; BLACK, GEORGE and POSTGATE 2000, 426.

¹⁸ *CAD* 20, 223.

¹⁹ VON SODEN 1965–1981, 1430.

²⁰ *CAD* 20, 227.

²¹ BLACK, GEORGE and POSTGATE 2000, 425.

²² VON SODEN 1965–1981, 1429.

²³ VAN BUREN 1945, 1.

Edzard translates both **šū-nir** and **urin** as “standard” in his translation of *Gudea Cylinder A*, and translates **šū-nir** as both “emblem” and “standard” in the same text.²⁴

Furthermore, although Pongratz-Leisten contends that the textual examples “lassen eine Differenzierung in dem Gebrauch der beiden Begriffe š u n i r und u r i nicht zu”,²⁵ Steinkeller argues that there is a distinction between the two.²⁶ According to Steinkeller, **urin** were emblems made of wood or reed which were erected at cultic sites as permanent or semi-permanent fixtures. On the other hand, he identifies **šū-nir** as standards, consisting of “a pole with a tassled cross-bar, on which there was mounted a divine symbol”,²⁷ and which were, as opposed to the **urin**, portable. This directly contradicts the dictionaries, which translate **šū-nir** not as “standard”, but as “emblem”. These issues may reflect the modern difficulties in dealing with the ancient concepts, and may also point towards a fluidity between conceptualisations of the **urin** and **šū-nir**.

A similar ambiguity is evident in the iconographic record where, for the third and fourth millennia, ‘standard’ is difficult to define due to the differences in the representation of these objects in the Uruk Period and in later periods. Furthermore, because an emblem was a component of a standard, there is not one single archetypal standard, but a variety of standards with different appearances. While some standards were in use for a period of a millennium or more, others are known from only one example. To study individual Mesopotamian standards of the third and fourth millennia BCE, the iconography of different standards across these two millennia needs to be examined in order to make comparisons and draw conclusions.

1.2. Definition

Due to the difficulties in defining ‘standard’ in the Mesopotamian context, and due to the differences in appearance of standards between the Uruk and later periods, the definition needs to be somewhat vague. In this work a standard is defined as: A long shaft with an attached emblem at the top. In some cases, there is no emblem surmounting the pole, but decoration at the side. The standard may or may not have streamers or tassels which hang from the base of the emblem. It may be held by a figure, whether that figure is a human, a deity, an animal, or a Mischwesen, or it may stand on the ground or be attached to a building in an architectural context. Staffs or sceptres are differentiated from standards in that they have shorter shafts.²⁸

²⁴ For the translation of **urin** as ‘standard’, see EDZARD 1997, 84 RIME E3/1.1.7.CylA, xxiv 21, for the translation of **šū-nir** as ‘standard’, see for example EDZARD 1997, 78 RIME E3/1.1.7.CylA, xiv 18 and 27, and for the translation as “emblem”, see EDZARD 1997, 78 RIME E3/1.1.7.CylA, xiv 23.

²⁵ PONGRATZ-LEISTEN 1992, 307.

²⁶ STEINKELLER 1998, 88–89.

²⁷ STEINKELLER 1998, 89.

²⁸ In some cases in this work, a shorter staff may be depicted, but by comparison to other examples of the same type of standard, the object may be understood to be a standard.

1.3. Previous Studies on Mesopotamian Standards

There has been limited research done into Mesopotamian standards, particularly in the visual culture. Bleibtreu and Deller provide invaluable insight into the function and symbolism of standards,²⁹ but the standards discussed in these studies are from the Neo-Assyrian Period (ca. 934–609 BCE) and therefore date to more than a millennium later than the period discussed in the present work. Similarly, Seidl discusses two battle standards from the reign of Aššurnasirpal II,³⁰ and Preusser discusses a Neo-Assyrian standard from the archaeological record at Aššur.³¹ Vidal discusses the military standards of the Old Babylonian Period,³² which date to the beginning of the second millennium BCE, and Porada discusses standards on cylinder seal impressions from Nuzi,³³ but these date to the second half of the second millennium BCE. Pongratz-Leisten's works, although including earlier standards, are philological: the differing terms used to describe Mesopotamian standards and an analysis of the textual evidence for standards respectively.³⁴

Mayer-Opificius's and Sarre's studies discuss standards from the Uruk Period until the Neo-Assyrian Period and from the Early Dynastic Period until the sixteenth century CE respectively,³⁵ but their focus is specifically on military or battle standards, and are therefore of limited value to a study on standards in general. Additionally, Sarre's work is more than a century old and is therefore outdated. Seidl's discussion on the archaeological and iconographic evidence for Mesopotamian standards in the *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie*,³⁶ on the other hand, gives an up-to-date overview of the material available, but the information is compressed and limited.

Some specific iconographic representations of standards have been discussed, but these are also not comprehensive studies of those standards. For example, Bänder's monograph on the Naram-Sîn Victory Stele discusses the standards depicted on this stele, but only a page and a half are devoted to these standards, and, although the appearance of the standards is described, there is no attempt to understand their symbolic meaning or place them within a broader context.³⁷ The standards depicted on the Gudea Stelae are discussed in Suter's definitive study on the Gudea material (ca.

²⁹ BLEIBTREU 1992; DELLER 1992.

³⁰ SEIDL 1993.

³¹ PREUSSER 1954, 44–45, p. 19.

³² VIDAL 2009.

³³ PORADA 1975.

³⁴ PONGRATZ-LEISTEN 1992; 2011–2013.

³⁵ MAYER-OPIFICIUS 1996; SARRE 1903.

³⁶ SEIDL 2001–2013a.

³⁷ BÄNDER 1995, 228–229. I also published a discussion on the standards on the Victory Stele of Naram-Sîn, VAN DIJK 2016, but that publication stemmed from the research conducted for the present work.

2144–2124 BCE),³⁸ and these are placed within a broad context, but they are not compared with similar standards from the same period.

Szarzyńska examines the standards of the Uruk Period in the iconographic record and as signs in the archaic Uruk script.³⁹ The focus though is on the standards as iconograms or ideograms, and the iconographic context in which the standards are found is not discussed in detail. Steinkeller also discusses one of the standards which appears in both the iconographic record and the archaic Uruk script,⁴⁰ but, again, his arguments are primarily philological, and the texts which he uses date to a later period.

There is therefore a dearth of information on standards represented in the iconographic record of Mesopotamia during the third and fourth millennia BCE, and the aim of this study is to fill that void.

1.4. Methodology

1.4.1. Text and Image

Studies on ancient Near Eastern materials have traditionally been divided into those dealing with philology and those dealing with material culture, with the primary focus being on texts, and with the visual culture being understood as derivative.⁴¹ As early as 1964 Oppenheim contended that “the texts on clay tablets are far more valuable, far more relevant, than the monuments that have been discovered, although the latter ... offer welcome illustration to the wealth of factual information contained on clay tablets, stelae, and votive offerings”.⁴² However, Bahrani contends that “the primacy of text as the most truthful and transparent source of historical information ... is rejected by historical criticism”.⁴³ Because the majority of the population of ancient Mesopotamia in the third and fourth millennia BCE were illiterate, “the importance of the visual in a largely non-literate society should not be underestimated”.⁴⁴ The visual repertoire can provide information which can be either complementary or distinct from that surmised from textual sources.⁴⁵ Cooper goes so far as to call textual and visual sources “incongruent corpora”, stating that they were “for the most part, separate and only partially overlapping traditions”.⁴⁶ This is not to say that either texts or images should be completely ignored when examining a topic, but that rather than looking for direct or perfect matches, a “mental background” should be sought.⁴⁷ As Asher-Greve

³⁸ SUTER 2000, 177–189. The fragments of the Gudea Stelae which bear images of standards are discussed below in 5.8.1. and 5.9.5.2.

³⁹ SZARZYŃSKA 1987–88; 1996.

⁴⁰ STEINKELLER 1998.

⁴¹ CRAWFORD 2014, 241–242.

⁴² OPPENHEIM 1964, 10.

⁴³ BAHRANI 2002, 19.

⁴⁴ WINTER 2010f, 73.

⁴⁵ WINTER 2010f, 72.

⁴⁶ COOPER 2008, 69.

⁴⁷ SUTER 2000, 8.

and Westenholz argue, “combined analysis of textual sources, visual images and other material and contextual evidence produces a more differentiated picture... than focusing on images or on text alone”.⁴⁸ Despite this, some studies by necessity will need to focus on one type of source – text or image.⁴⁹ In this regard, the cuneiform script was first developed during the period under discussion in this study, and texts mentioning standards are first known from around the middle of the third millennium BCE.⁵⁰ Therefore, there are no texts for comparative study for the first period of this study, the Uruk Period, and very few of use date to the Early Dynastic Period, or, indeed, the Akkadian Period. However, some of the signs of the archaic Uruk script dating from the Uruk Period represent standards,⁵¹ and the script itself can therefore be used as a comparative source in the iconographic study of standards. The present work therefore focuses on the Mesopotamian visual culture, with ancient texts and the archaic Uruk script itself being used where applicable or where possible to elucidate finds.

1.4.2. The Iconographic Method

Recent studies on ancient Near Eastern visual culture have analysed the ability of images to “reflect, instantiate, and give shape to the beliefs, values, ideologies, and social systems operative within a given historical and cultural setting”.⁵² The aim of the present work is then to analyse the portrayal of standards in third and fourth millennium BCE Mesopotamian visual culture in an attempt to understand their form, function and symbolism, and by extension to gain a greater understanding of third and fourth millennium BCE Mesopotamian culture. This has been done by employing the iconographic method. Iconography is defined as “that branch of the history of art which concerns itself with the subject matter or meaning of works of art, as opposed to their form”,⁵³ and works to “retrieve the symbolic and allegorical meanings contained in works of art”.⁵⁴ This model, by which material is collected, examined, interpreted and classified, was first developed by the art historian Erwin Panofsky for analyzing Renaissance art,⁵⁵ and has been adapted and refined by Othmar Keel and the ‘Fribourg School’ for the study of ancient Near Eastern visual material.⁵⁶ It has been successfully used in many ancient Near Eastern studies on visual culture, whether explicitly, as

⁴⁸ ASHER-GREVE and WESTENHOLZ 2013, 9.

⁴⁹ Furthermore, some questions can only be answered by analysing one type of source. The research questions laid out below in 1.6. are reflective of this.

⁵⁰ According to the *ePSD*, **ur**in is first attested during the ED IIIb Period, and **su-nir** is first attested in the Akkadian Period. For more on the textual evidence for standards, see PONGRATZ-LEISTEN 1992, 2011–2013.

⁵¹ See below, especially 2.1. and Table 1.

⁵² BONFIGLIO 2016, 2.

⁵³ PANOFSKY 1939, 3.

⁵⁴ D’ALLEVA 2005, 23.

⁵⁵ PANOFSKY 1939; 1955.

⁵⁶ E.g. KEEL 1992; 1997; KEEL and UEHLINGER 1998.

for example Bonatz,⁵⁷ Weissenrieder and Wendt,⁵⁸ and Winter,⁵⁹ or unstated, as for example Frankfort,⁶⁰ and Ornan.⁶¹

According to the iconographic method, three layers of meaning can be discerned in an image – the first, the ‘iconographic description’, is a pure description of what is seen, in the second, the ‘iconographic analysis’, the subject of the representation is determined, and finally, the aim of the ‘iconological interpretation’ is to reveal underlying meanings. Bonfiglio differentiates between the ‘iconographic interpretation’, the deeper meaning expressed by the image, and the ‘iconological interpretation’, why the image was created as it was.⁶² In this manner, iconology implies an analysis of the cultural value of an analysed image,⁶³ and an understanding of the cultural context of the image is therefore necessary. In other words, an image, once created, conveys the natural, economic, political, social and religious realities of the culture in which it was created,⁶⁴ and interpretation of the image needs some understanding of these.

Iconography can involve the analysis of motifs, scenes/themes and decorations, and each of these may mean something different depending on the context(s) in which it is found.⁶⁵ In the present study a standard is considered to be a motif, and various standards are found in a variety of scenes. These have been studied and evaluated using what D’Alleva terms “comparative iconographic analysis”,⁶⁶ in order to find similarities and differences in iconography to provide a deeper understanding not only of each individual standard, but also of standards in general. In this regard, developments across time need to be taken into consideration. According to Ornan, because of the “conservative nature of ancient art, one may apply conclusions from early findings to later ones, and vice versa.”⁶⁷ However, the research undertaken during this study has uncovered a number of innovations and changes over time. Still, these changes follow a logical chronological order, and a hypothesis of this study is therefore that information learned about standards from one period may be used, within reason, to gain insight into standards from another period.

1.4.3. Sources

The primary sources for this study are the artefacts which constitute the iconographic record. Glyptic art, particularly cylinder seals, is by far the most common source for

⁵⁷ BONATZ 2000.

⁵⁸ WEISSENRIEDER and WENDT 2005.

⁵⁹ WINTER 2010a.

⁶⁰ FRANKFORT 1939a.

⁶¹ ORNAN 2005.

⁶² BONFIGLIO 2016, 119–120. The distinction between ‘iconography’ and ‘iconology’ is usually ignored with the term ‘iconography’ being used to describe both the complete method as well as each of the three stages, BONFIGLIO 2016, 120.

⁶³ CIAFALONI 1995, 535.

⁶⁴ BONATZ 2000, 7.

⁶⁵ KEEL 1992; 1997; KEEL and UEHLINGER 1998.

⁶⁶ D’ALLEVA 2005, 27–28.

⁶⁷ ORNAN 2005, 10.

pictorial representations in the ancient Near East. The majority of examples of standards therefore come from depictions on seals, either from the cylinder seal itself, or from an impression of the seal. Standards are also represented in other media, including inlays, painting and relief sculpture decorating vessels, relief sculpture on plaques, stelae and stela fragments, a trough, architectural models, and sculpture in the round. Not only are depictions of standards represented, but also extremely rare examples of actual standards and emblems from the archaeological record. Images of seals have been collected into catalogues such as those by Amiet which represents the seals and seal impressions of the Uruk and Early Dynastic Periods,⁶⁸ and Boehmer which represents those of the Akkadian Period.⁶⁹ Various institutions have also published their collections of seals, as for example the Yale Babylonian Collection,⁷⁰ the British Museum,⁷¹ and the Pierpont Morgan Library.⁷² Cylinder seals and other artefacts from specific sites have also been collected together and published in excavation reports. These provide the primary sources for the objects included in the catalogue of the present study.

Ancient texts that were contemporary with the source artefacts mention standards, and in the archaic Uruk script itself some standards were represented as symbols in the script.⁷³ These provide further information on the primary iconographic sources. However, in this work, although both texts and script are referenced, they are not the primary focus of this study. The presence of the same standards in both the iconographic record and in the archaic Uruk script suggests some connection between the two, and the sources should not be studied independently. However, it is not the main intention of this work to explain and discuss the use of standards in the archaic Uruk script, but in the iconographic record.

1.5. Research Design

The goal of this study is to document the development of the use and symbolism of different standards over the period of the third and fourth millennia BCE – from the Uruk Period until the Neo-Sumerian Period (4000–2004 BCE).⁷⁴ In order to make the study feasible and accomplishable, it had to have limitations. The motifs under inves-

⁶⁸ AMIET 1980.

⁶⁹ BOEHMER 1965.

⁷⁰ BUCHANAN 1981.

⁷¹ WISEMAN 1962; COLLON 1982.

⁷² PORADA 1948.

⁷³ See below, 2.1. and throughout Chapter 2.

⁷⁴ Although the term ‘Uruk’ will be used for convenience, the majority of works discussed date to the end of the Uruk Period or the Jemdet Nasr Period. The term ‘Neo-Sumerian’ is preferred to the Third Dynasty of Ur or Ur III Period, not because it suggests some Sumerian revival, but because it is more inclusive of other dynasties of some importance during the period, such as the Second Dynasty of Lagaš/Lagaš II. When ‘Ur III’ is used in the present work, it refers specifically to the Third Dynasty of Ur.

tigation were limited to standards, as defined above in 1.2. The study was confined to those standards which were found in Mesopotamia. However, a select few standards from outside Mesopotamia have been mentioned where these were relevant to the study. For example, the Proto-Elamite crescent standards on U71–U73⁷⁵ are mentioned because of their significance to the argument of the deity associated with the crescent standard during the Uruk Period, as well as the relevance to the origin of crescent standards.

Temporally, the study was limited to the third and fourth millennia BCE, covering the Uruk (ca. 4000–2900 BCE), Early Dynastic (ca. 2900–2334 BCE), Akkadian (ca. 2334–2150 CE) and Neo-Sumerian (ca. 2157–2004 BCE) Periods and the Sumerian and Akkadian cultures. The reason for studying this period and these cultures is that by the Neo-Sumerian Period “both Sumerians and Akkadians had long been assimilated into a homogenous population with common traditions and culture”.⁷⁶ Bottéro even argues against differentiating between Sumerian and Akkadian culture, thought and religion, recognising “only one composite culture.”⁷⁷ This is not to say that the culture remained static. That it changed over a period of two thousand years is to be expected, but these changes were a development of a society, rather than complete breaks in tradition between the Sumerians and Akkadians. While the Isin-Larsa Period (ca. 2004–1763 BCE) shows continuity with the preceding Neo-Sumerian Period, it is more commonly associated with the Old Babylonian Period which followed it.⁷⁸ The third and fourth millennia BCE therefore provide a well-defined cultural and temporal unit for study.

The research design comprised of the collection, cataloguing, iconographic analysis, and iconological interpretation of the examples of standards of third and fourth millennia BCE Mesopotamia, and the comparison of these examples in order to deduce the function, symbolism and context of the different kinds of standards.

1.6. Research Questions

The iconography of the different Mesopotamian standards of the third and fourth millennia BCE was studied in order to answer seven major and interrelated questions:

1. Textual evidence of standards in the early periods is somewhat limited. There are texts which mention standards, and there are rare examples where a standard is de-

⁷⁵ For these standards, see 2.4.

⁷⁶ OATES 1986, 43.

⁷⁷ BOTTÉRO 1992, 2.

⁷⁸ See for example the *Mesopotamien – Annäherungen* series in which the Akkadian and Neo-Sumerian Periods are discussed together in *Annäherungen 3, Akkade-Zeit und Ur III-Zeit*, ATTINGER and WÄFLER 1999, and *Annäherungen 4, Die altbabylonische Zeit* includes the Isin and Larsa dynasties, ATTINGER, SALLABERGER and WÄFLER 2004. Similarly, in the *Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia (RIM)* series, the Isin and Larsa dynasties are discussed in RIME 4, *Old Babylonian Period (2003–1595 BC)*, FRAYNE 1990; and in the catalogues of cylinder seals of the British Museum, the Isin-Larsa and Old Babylonian seals are discussed together, COLLON 1986.

scribed in some manner. For example, the materials from which standards are made are recorded, as in a royal inscription of Enanatum I which describes how he “had (this text) inscrib[ed] on a copper standard and a ‘sheep’ of the copper standard fixed on wood belonging to the god *Ḫendersaḡ*”.⁷⁹ This standard (**urin**), dedicated to *Ḫendersaḡ*, therefore had a copper emblem surmounting a wooden pole. From the Isin-Larsa Period at the start of the second millennium BCE, *Šū-ilīšu*, the second ruler of the Isin Dynasty, describes how he fashioned for the god Nanna “a great standard [^d**šu-nir-gal**], a tree fit for a (rich) harvest, evoking wonder, coloured with gold, silver, and shining lapis lazuli, . . . , a sil[ver] image”.⁸⁰ While the latter inscription dates from later than the period under discussion in the present work, it points to the precious materials used to craft standards in the earlier period as well. In contrast, the material from which a standard is made is usually not discernible in the iconographic record.⁸¹

Texts may also provide some indication as to the decoration of a standard. For example, Gudea describes the standards (**urin**) of the Eninnu temple as having pointed tops which “he made glitter like (the horns of) the sacred ibexes of the Abzu”.⁸² Gudea also describes or gives the names of some standards (**šu-nir**). Ningirsu’s standard is the Thunderbird, or Anzu, **AN.IM.MI.MUŠEN šu-nir-lugal-la-na-kam**,⁸³ and Utu’s is “the Bison head”, **šu-nir-^dutu saḡ-alim-ma**.⁸⁴ The emblems of these two standards may then appear as Anzu and as a bull’s head respectively. With regard to the names of standards, another of Ningirsu’s standards is called the **šu-nir-maḡ-bi lugal-kur-dúb**, Nanše’s is the **u₅-kù šu-nir-^dnanše-kam**, and Inana’s is the **aš-me šu-nir-^dinanna-kam**.⁸⁵

These names may offer some insight into the appearance of these specific standards, but this is not the norm – descriptions of standards are rare in the contemporary texts. Therefore, the first research question must be how did the different standards represented in the iconographic record of Mesopotamia during the third and fourth millennia BCE look? Did their appearance stay consistent, or were there variations in how one type of standard may look?

2. The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary describes a standard as “the distinctive ensign of a sovereign, commander, nation, etc.”⁸⁶ In the ancient Mesopotamian context, standards were instead first and foremost associated with deities. The second research question is then with which deity/deities was each standard associated? Was this reflected in the appearance of the standard, and if so, how? It should be noted that “[l]inking the numerous standards and symbols depicted in Akkadian art with specific

⁷⁹ FRAYNE 2008, 173 RIME E1.9.4.2, xiii 1–7.

⁸⁰ FRAYNE 1990, 17 RIME E4.1.2.2, i 15–22.

⁸¹ Although see the reed standards of the Uruk Period, below in 2.

⁸² EDZARD 1997, 84 RIME E3/1.1.7.CylA, xxiv 21–22.

⁸³ EDZARD 1997, 77 RIME E3/1.1.7.CylA, xiii 22. See also 5.10.

⁸⁴ EDZARD 1997, 85 RIME E3/1.1.7.CylA, xxvi 4.

⁸⁵ EDZARD 1997, 78 RIME E3/1.1.7.CylA, xiv 18, xiv 23 and xiv 27 respectively. For these three standards, see below, 5.8 and 5.9.

⁸⁶ BROWN 2002, 3000.

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