

Five Legs or Four?

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Özet

Arketipal insan başlı aslan ve boğa biçimli sütunları beş bacağına sahip olmaları dolayısıyla oldukça dikkat çekicidirler. Bunlar cep-heden bakınca iki, profilden bakınca ise dört bacaklı gibi görünmektedirler. Bu çalışmada söz konusu mefhumun olası Anadolu-lu kökleri ele alınmaktadır.

I have much pleasure in submitting these ideas for the perusal and, I hope, enjoyment, of Hayat Erkanal, a good friend and colleague who has, over the years, spent much time examining cultural exchanges between Anatolia and its neighbours. I very much hope that he, and other readers, may be able to suggest further examples of the five-legged phenomenon discussed below.

When we think of the most characteristic examples of Assyrian art of the ninth to seventh centuries B.C., we think not only of the relief sculptures with which a succession of Assyrian kings, beginning with Assurnasirpal II (884-859 B.C.), decorated the walls of their palaces, but also of the huge, human-headed, winged lions and bulls which guarded the doorways of these palaces and the gates of their cities. Both the reliefs and colossi were, however, inspired by the carved orthostats and portal figures of the Neo-Hittite and Aramaean cities on the borders of Turkey and Syria.¹

In Mesopotamia, from at least the third millennium B.C., pairs of lions framed the doorways of temples, but these were small-scale, less than life-size copper/bronze or terracotta examples (Ubaid, Tell Harmal, Haditha, Mari, Nuzi). The Assyrians' concept was inspired by the much larger stone examples in their north-western provinces, but they created something far more monumental. They developed a three-dimensional version of the winged, human-headed lions and bulls previously depicted primarily on cylinder seals.² In so doing, they were harnessing for their protection the most powerful intellect - that of man, the speed of the most powerful bird - the eagle, and the strength of the most powerful wild animal - the lion (albeit controlled by a belt³), or the strength of the most powerful domesticated animal - the bull; the whole concept was literally crowned by the horned headdress of divinity. In a few examples from Nimrud the marine world is also represented with the incorporation of a fish's tail under the belly of the animal (Fig. 1).⁴

The creatures were carved out of monolithic blocks of stone, with surviving examples weighing from ten to over thirty tons. Their size alone made an imperial statement since only a king with huge armies of slaves at his disposal could move these heavy blocks of stone the many miles from the quarries (Fig. 2).⁵ Later examples, cast from bronze - a truly

exceptional technological feat - have not survived due to built-in obsolescence; they were melted down and recycled. These colossi were only partly three-dimensional: the huge blocks from which they emerged were incorporated into the structures of the monumental entrances, buttressing the walls and supporting huge arches. When we face them, they stand guard like well-trained sentinels, feet planted firmly side by side. But like all good guards, they also patrol their area: when viewed from the side they are shown pacing forward, regardless of the huge arches they carry, to meet any threat from outside. So, until the very end of the eighth century B.C., the guardian colossi of Assyria had five legs: two when seen from the front, with both front legs also being visible in the profile view! This extra leg generally has to be pointed out to visitors to the British Museum; it is so alien to our way of visualising that it is easily missed. Sennacherib decided against the extra leg, perhaps in order to provide a larger, unbroken area for the inscriptions celebrating his activities (see Fig. 2). From then on, and into Achaemenid Persian times, only four legs were depicted.

I imagined that the Assyrians had adopted the concept of five legs from the Syro-Hittite world at the same time as they took over the monumental portal figures. However, I failed to find Syro-Hittite examples of five-legged guardian figures, and began to think that the concept might be an Assyrian invention. Then I discovered that the same phenomenon occurs at Boğazköy. Indeed, it is the very first object to greet the visitor approaching the Great Temple of the Weather God of Hatti, and was published by Texier in 1839 and by Perrot and Chipiez in 1887 (Fig. 3) as a throne.⁶ It was correctly identified as a trough by Puchstein almost a century ago (Fig. 4).⁷ However, it would be difficult to understand the object without Puchstein's reconstruction (Fig. 5) (since conveniently reproduced in Jürgen Seeher's excellent pocket-guide to the site⁸).

The object concerned, known as the Lion Basin, was a large trough, originally almost 6 m long, carved from a single block of limestone. At each end were the three-dimensional heads of two lions, side by side with their tongues hanging out, and with their forepaws on the plinth before them. The bodies of the four lions are shown prowling forwards, back to back, in

low-relief on the sides, with their tails reconstructed as raised and linked behind them. Chisel marks indicate that in Roman or Byzantine times the basin was cut into pieces, many of which were removed. The central part of the base survives, together with part of one end. On top of this rests a block of stone from the other end, consisting of a well-preserved lion's head and part of its body (Figs. 6-7). This trough is probably to be dated to the thirteenth century B.C. and is therefore about five centuries earlier than the Assyrian examples. Although it would have been visible in the early ninth century B.C., it is unlikely that the Assyrians sought inspiration in the ruins of Boğazköy.

In the Autumn of 2002, Dr. Geoffrey Summers, the excavator of Kerkenes, showed me some photographs of a nearby quarry site he had visited which had clearly been abandoned.⁹ On the hillside were a series of half-finished troughs and lions. Two of these lions had five legs - two when seen from the front and four in profile! It may be that this was the quarry from which the Hittites obtained the troughs and lions for their capital, and that it was abandoned at the time of the collapse of the Hittite empire at the end of the thirteenth century B.C. Again, any connection with Assyria is unlikely.

Let us move to the first millennium B.C. In the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara there is a large column base supported by two winged, human-headed lions. It stood in the entrance of the palace at Sakçagözü (Figs. 8-9).¹⁰ The hairstyle of the beardless human heads is Assyrian from the reign of Sargon II (721-705 B.C.), with the addition of a forelock hanging down on either side, through which the ears are visible. There is no headdress, but most unusually the hair incorporates pairs of horns on either side of the head. Instead of a mane, there is a dense feather pattern across the front (with a curved and decorated neckline) and shoulders, similar to that found on Assyrian counterparts. From this long wings extend horizontally along the whole length of the sides, and form the flat base on which sits the circular, ribbed disc which would have supported the column. There is fur along the backs of the front legs and haunches, and under the belly there is a line of fur characteristic of Asiatic lions. Each creature has

two forelegs when seen from the front, firmly planted, with one paw slightly in advance of the other, and there are two legs side by side when seen from the back. The near front and back legs are also visible in the side view, together with an extra back leg, making a total of five legs! The tasselled tail curls between the two back legs on the side.

A pair of closely similar bases was found at Zincirli supporting the entrance columns of Hilani III (Figs. 10-11).¹¹ There are some small differences: the horns in the hair and the fur on the haunches are lacking, the forelocks hang in front of the ears, the feathery "neckline" is simpler and the forepaws are aligned. However, although there are five legs disposed like those on the Sakçagözü base, and the tail curls between the back legs on the side, there are two notable differences: an extra wing hangs down in a curve behind the near foreleg, and an extra tasselled tail hangs straight down between the legs at the back! A fragmentary base of the same type in Berlin, also from Zincirli, supported the column in the entrance to the Northern "Hallenbau" at Zincirli.¹² It too has the extra curved wing, but the back view is not visible in the published photograph.

These bases therefore differ from the Assyrian lion colossi where, because the monolith is part of the architecture, there is never a back view, and four legs are shown on the side. Where the Assyrian lions have an extra front leg in profile, however, the Zincirli lions have an extra lowered wing. In view of the late dating of these bases and their Sargonid hairstyles, they did not influence Assyria.¹³ However, although they were influenced by Assyria, they maintained their own individuality - they supported columns, they had different proportions, they had lowered wings and they could be seen from the back.

So the problem of the origins of the five legs in Assyria remains. It is not possible at present to establish a relationship between the second millennium Hittite examples from Anatolia and those of the first millennium from Assyria, yet it is probable that the Assyrians found their inspiration in the Neo-Hittite world. Some pieces of this puzzle are still missing.

Footnotes

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1 Winter 1982, 356-7.

2 Danrey 2004, Figs. 5-7.

3 Collon 2001.

4 For complete coverage of the very representative examples from Nimrud, see Paley and Sobolewski 1992.

5 Sennacherib's bull-moving scenes have been fully published in Barnett et al. 1998, 64-70, Nos. 135-83, Pls. 78-79, 96-126.

6 Perrot and Chipiez 1887, 610-1, Figs. 296-298.

7 Puchstein 1912, 134-5.

8 Seeher 2002, 11, Fig. 10b.

9 To be published by Summers in a forthcoming volume of *TÜBA-AR*.

10 Orthmann 1971, 531, Sakçagözü A/9 in Ankara, Pl. 50b; Ht. 0,85 x L. 1,45 x W. 1,05 m.

11 Koldewey 1898, 157, Pl. XXXIII; Luschan 1911, 338-41, Pl. LVI; Orthmann 1971, 340, Zincirli H/1 in Istanbul, Pl. 64d; Ht. 0,96 x L. 1,55 x W. 1,24 m. It is a pair with Zincirli H/2 in Berlin; Ht. 1,03 m.

12 Orthmann 1971, 546-7, Sakçagözü F/2 in Berlin, Pl. 63e; Ht. 1 m.

13 W. Orthmann (1971, 221) does not think the Sargonid features are conclusive enough to preclude a slightly earlier date, but this does not affect the present argument.

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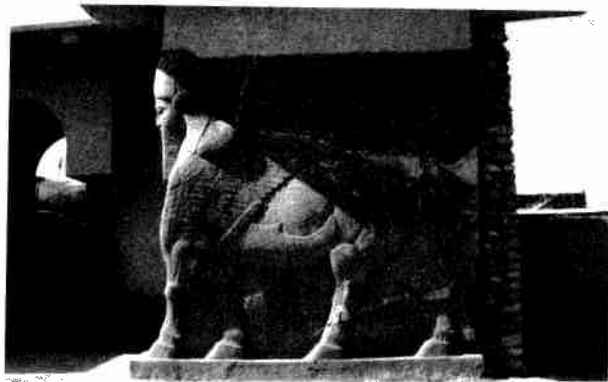


Fig. 1: Guardian figure ED-1 at Entrance E to Ashurnasirpal's throneroom at Nimrud. Photographed by the author in June 2003.

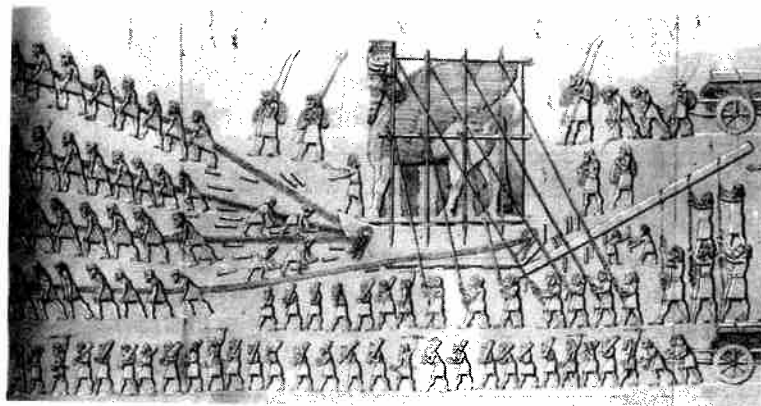


Fig. 2: Moving Sennacherib's bull (Layard 1853, 113).

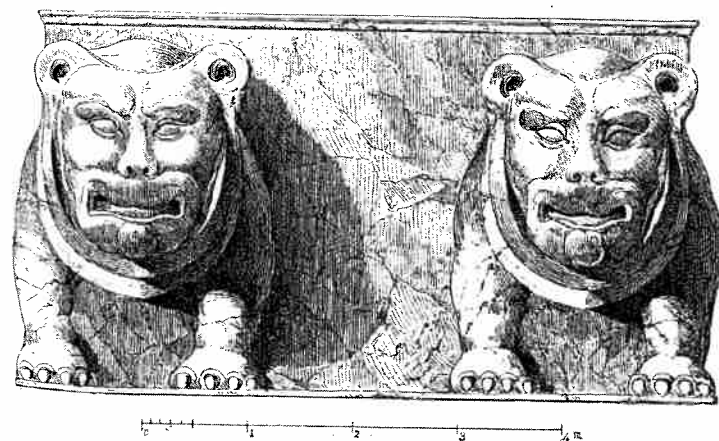


Fig. 3: The Boğazköy Lion basin (Perrot and Chipiez 1887, 611, reproducing Texier's 1839 illustration).

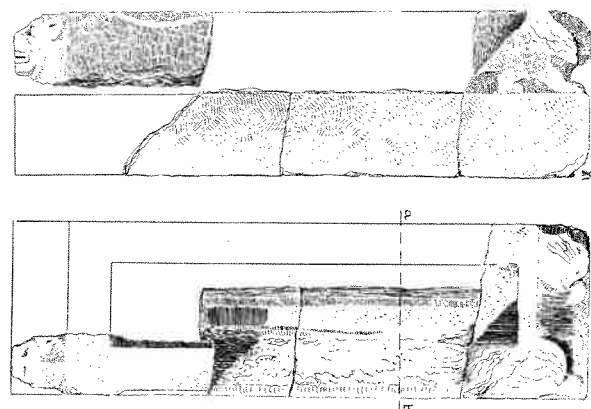


Fig. 4: The Boğazköy Lion basin. Side and top views (Puchstein 1912, 134).

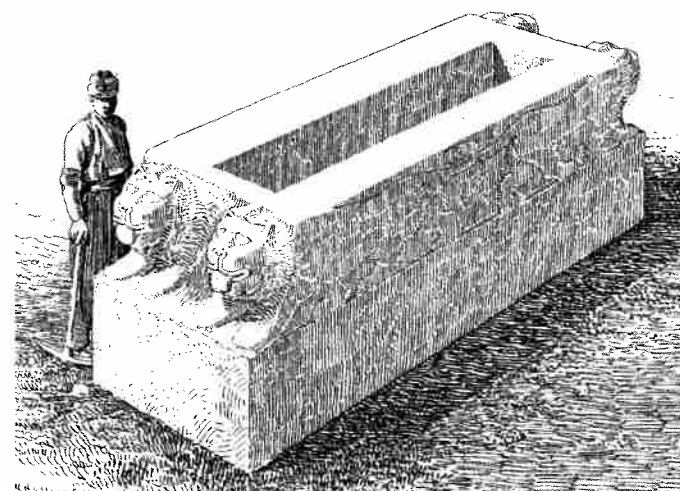


Fig. 5: The Boğazköy Lion basin. Reconstruction (Puchstein 1912, 135).



Fig. 7: The Boğazköy Lion basin. Photographed by the author in September 2004.



Fig. 9: The Sakçagözü base in the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations. Photographed by the author in September 2004.



Fig. 6: The Boğazköy Lion basin. Photographed by the author in September 2004.



Fig. 8: The Sakçagözü base in the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations. Photographed by the author in September 2004.



Fig. 10: The Zincirli base from Hilani III in the Ancient Orient Museum, Istanbul (Luschan 1911, Pl. LVI).



Fig. 11: The Zincirli base from Hilani III in the Ancient Orient Museum, Istanbul (Luschan 1911, Pl. LVI).