

RELATIONS BETWEEN PHRYGIA AND ASSYRIA IN THE 8TH CENTURY B.C.

OSCAR WHITE MUSCARELLA*

Contemporary historical references to Mita of Mushki occur only in the Assyrian texts of Sargon II. A number of scholars, including the writer, accept the likely view that the Assyrian Mita equals the Greek form Midas, and that accounts of the Mushki refer to (greater) Phrygia, a nation ruled by Midas¹. The first reference to Midas (as I shall call him), comes from Sargon's fifth year, 717 B.C., and records that Pisiris of Carchemish, who had a treaty with Assyria, sought alliance with Midas². For this independent action Sargon retaliated by attacking Carchemish, an action that surely indicates a conflict with Midas, albeit indirect. Two years later, in 715 B.C., Sargon claims to have defeated Midas' forces in Mushki territory, and at the same time to have recovered some cities that the Mushki had previously captured in his vassal state Que. In 714-713 B.C. Mushki and Urartu supported a rebel from Sargon's control, Ambaris of Bit Burutash (apparently a Tabal land, southeast of Mushki), indicating that both states had formed an anti-Assyrian coalition³. Previously, in 718, and now again in 713 B.C., Sargon invaded Tabal, the area where Midas sought alliances, especially with Urpallu of Tyana⁴. In 711 B.C.

* Dr. Oscar WHITE MUSCARELLA, Dept. of Ancient Near Eastern Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY 10028, USA.

¹ Oscar White Muscarella, "The Background to the Phrygian Bronze Industry", in *Bronzeworking Centres of Western Asia 1000-539 BC...*, ed. John Curtis (KPI Limited, London, 1987) 177 ff.

² M. Mellink, "Mita, Mushki and Phrygians", *Anadolu Araştırmaları* 1965, 318; M. Wäfler, *Nicht-Assyrer in d. neuassyrischen Darstellung* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1975) 190 f.; J. N. Postgate, "Assyrian Texts and Fragments", *Iraq* 35 (1973) 32 ff.

³ In 714 B.C. Urartu had sustained a major defeat in the east (northwestern Iran). For the latest discussion see Oscar White Muscarella, "The Location of Ulhu and Uīše in Sargon II's Eighth Campaign, 714 B.C.," *JFA* 13 (1986) 465 ff.

⁴ Urpallu and Midas sent a joint delegation to the Assyrian Governor of Que in 709 B.C. (Postgate, op. cit., in note 2), 23 ff.; and Urpallu is depicted more than once wearing Phrygian clothing and a Phrygian fibula: Muscarella 1987, op. cit. (in note 1) note 6. M. Wäfler, "Zu status und Lage von Tabal", *Orientalia* 52 (1983) 189 believes that Tabal previously paid tribute to Urartu.

Sargon claims to have marched to the borders of Mushki and Urartu for the purpose of sealing their borders, and in the following year the Assyrian governor of Que invaded Mushki, destroying several cities and fortresses. That this defeat actually occurred is verified by Midas' subsequent action, for, realizing the possibility of further invasion, he drastically modified his foreign policy. We know from a letter written by Sargon to his governor in Que that in 709 B.C. Urik, the nominal ruler of Que, secretly sent an embassy of fourteen men to Urartu⁵. The embassy was intercepted by Midas and, no doubt to the chagrin and surprise of Urik, was handed over to the Assyrian governor. With this treacherous act Midas initiated a peace policy with Sargon; prisoners were exchanged, and, according to Sargon, Midas abandoned interest in Tabal. After 709 B.C. there is nothing extant in the Assyrian, or any other contemporary texts with regard to Midas and the Mushki.

What evidence exists other than the Assyrian texts concerning the Midas-Sargon relationship and the subsequent alliance of 709 B.C.? Is archaeological investigation able to illustrate and expand upon the textual information? As we shall see, the answer is yes, but it is limited and ambiguous. Archaeological research focuses naturally on the art and artifact finds from Phrygian—the appropriate cultural term in Anatolian archaeology—and Assyrian sites, with the goal in mind both to record evidence of normal cultural exchange between the two states, and evidence of possible gift-exchanges that may have accompanied the treaty-alliance diplomacy.

Starting with Assyria, not a single recognizably Phrygian artifact has been excavated at Sargon's capital at Khorsabad or at any other Assyrian site. This lack may of course be an accident of preservation, but it is an archaeological fact. However, there is good evidence from Assyria that Phrygians indeed came to Khorsabad and brought goods to Sargon as gifts of tribute, most probably to commemorate the alliance of 709 B.C.

A number of the campaigns of Sargon are illustrated in wall reliefs in his palace at Khorsabad. These reliefs adorn the walls of several rooms; one, Room VI, is of special concern to us. The reliefs of Room VI were published in 1849 in a panoramic elevation drawing, and, in part, in detail drawings executed by Eugène Napoléon Flandin in 1844⁶. The pano-

⁵ Postgate, op. cit. (in note 2) 23.

⁶ P. E. Botta, E. N. Flandin, *Monument de Ninive* 5 vols. (Paris, 1949-50); P. Albenda, *The Palace of Sargon King of Assyria*, Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations no. 22 (Paris, 1986) 71 ff., pls. 65-70, figs. 83-85.

ramic drawing of the reliefs of Room VI shows three groups of tribute bearers approaching the Assyrian king, who is accordingly depicted three times. All the tribute bearers are bearded and are shown wearing the same unbelted clothing and turbans, seemingly indicating that only one Volk are represented. In fact, several distinct Volk are discernable among the tribute bearers in Room VI, as is evidenced both from an examination of the more carefully and accurately drawn detail drawing and of the extant reliefs.

I and others have pointed out that one of the tribute bearers from the group in the south and southeastern area of the room, comprising slabs 29 to 36 and 1, wears in a conspicuous manner what is surely a Phrygian fibula. This fibula seems to be a marker, identifying the bearer to be a Mushki—that is, a Phrygian. And all the other bearers in this particular group must be Phrygians too, the fibula identifying the whole group⁷. A detail drawing of the fibula wearer and a companion (slab 34) shows that the Phrygians wear a belt with a toggle under their outer garment, and they have tassels pendant from the garment corners; another detail drawing shows that some Phrygians were bareheaded⁸. Among the objects carried are sacks, bowls, and four lion-headed situlae. I suggest that this group represents Phrygians sent by Midas to Sargon in 709 B.C. and not earlier, for Sargon specifically stated in his annals that the Phrygians had not submitted to him before that time⁹. The latest historical event depicted on the reliefs that is dated by extant inscriptions is the sack of Musasir in 714 B.C.,¹⁰ but it is not impossible that later events were illustrated.

In another detail drawing of the second group of tribute bearers, that of slabs 6-8 from the west wall, the figures are depicted wearing clothing different from that of the Phrygians, with no belt or tassels, indicating

⁷ Oscar White Muscarella, "Fibulae Represented on Sculpture", *JNES* 26 (1967) 82; idem 1987, op. cit. (in note 1) 179.

⁸ For convenience I cite Albenda, op. cit. (in note 6) pls. 68, 69.

⁹ D.D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia* II (Chicago, 1927) para. 43. Thus, R. S. Young's suggestion in *Three Great Early Tumuli* (Philadelphia, 1981) 123 that the reliefs could depict Phrygian tribute of 718 B. C. cannot be sustained. K. Deller, "SAG.DU UR.MAH, 'Löwenkopfsitula, Löwenkopfsbecher'", *BagdMitt* 16 (1985) 342 dates the reliefs between 712-705 B. C.

¹⁰ C. B. F. Walker in Albenda op. cit. (in note 6) 111.

that another Volk is represented here¹¹. Moreover, while there is no detail drawing of the third group represented, slabs 20-22 along the east wall, thanks to research by P. Albenda in Baghdad we now know that these bearers are not only dressed otherwise than shown on the panoramic drawings, but also different from that of both the Phrygians and the second group¹². Thus, there are three separate Volk represented in Room VI. Of interest to us are the objects carried by the third group: one bearer (not two as depicted on the panoramic drawing) carries two lion-headed situlae, of the very same form and style as those carried by the Phrygians.

Furthermore, on Facaden and L of the palace Assyrian attendants carry lion-headed situlae and large lion-headed vessels to the Assyrian king. And the banquet scenes represented in Rooms II and VII show Assyrians using lion-headed situlae as ladles dipped into a cauldron, while other Assyrians drink from small lion-headed cups¹³.

The evidence for the presence of lion-headed situlae in three separate areas at Khorsabad, where they are depicted as gifts brought by Phrygians and another Volk and also used by Assyrians at a banquet, complicates the investigation both of the cultural origin and the contemporary sources of these objects. For at Gordion, the Phrygian capital, a bronze lion-headed as well as a ram-headed situla were recovered from the late 8th century B.C. in Tumulus MM together with cauldrons and bowls¹⁴. As E. Simpson has suggested¹⁵, these objects were very likely used in a banquet associated with the funeral rites for the deceased individual, still unidentified, interred in Tumulus MM— a banquet using animal-headed situlae as dippers for cauldrons, not unlike their function in the Assyrian banquet depicted at Khorsabad. Judging by style, the situlae at Gordion cannot be considered to be Phrygian products as an examination of Phrygian animals

¹¹ Albenda op. cit. (in note 6) pl. 67.

¹² My Fig. 1 is Iraq Museum no. 60974/6-1, courtesy of the Iraq State Organization for Antiquities. Note that the heads, shoulders, and the vessels carried before the faces are all restored. See Albenda op. cit. (in note 6) fig. 85.

¹³ Ibid. pls. 16, 47, 123, 88, 89; Deller op. cit. (in note 9) 342, pl. 30a (this is Louvre AO 19881), 30b (Iraq Museum 72126; Albenda, 179, incorrectly describes this relief).

¹⁴ R. S. Young op. cit. (in note 9), pls. III, IV, 62, 63.

¹⁵ E. Simpson, "Royal Wooden Furniture from Gordion", *Archaeology* (Nov.-Dec., 1986) 47; see also Deller op. cit. (in note 9) 346.

makes manifest, and most scholars consider them to be Assyrian¹⁶. We may also note that two of the large cauldrons in Tumulus MM are imports as well, made very probably in North Syria¹⁷.

If then the lion-headed situla, and most probably also the ram-headed situla, at Gordion are Assyrian artifacts, how and when did they reach Gordion? And why were Assyrian artifacts sent by Midas as gifts to the Assyrian king? Let us first briefly examine the archaeological history of animal-headed vessels in the Near East during the first millennium B.C.

Aside from Gordion, the only other animal-headed situla excavated comes from Samos¹⁸. It may have a calf's head and is dated to the 8th-7th century B.C.; its style is uncertain but could be Assyrian. A representation in Assyrian style of figures carrying situlae occurs on a rim fragment of an unexcavated bronze coffin that has been associated with the so-called Ziwiye treasure in Iran. Depicted is a procession of tribute bearers approaching an Assyrian dignitary. The bearers are probably a Zagros Volk, and two carry animal-headed situlae¹⁹. Both heads are unclear with regard to the species represented because of corrosion. While it is uncertain whether the first head is depicted frontally or from the side, the second head does seem to be depicted frontally. It is tempting to see at least this latter head as a lion.

¹⁶ A. von Saldern, "Glass Finds at Gordion", *Jour. Glass Studies* 1 (1959) 30; K. Tuchelt, *Tiergefäße in Kopf- und Protomengestalt* (Berlin, 1962) 62; R. S. Young op. cit. (in note 9) 123; P. H. G. Howes-Smith, "Two Oriental Bronze Bowls in Utrecht", *BABesch* 56 (1981) 13; Wäfler op. cit. (in note 2) 193. P. Calmeyer in W. Kleiss, *Bastam I* (Berlin, 1979) 198, 201, and Mellink in R. S. Young op. cit. (in note 9) 268 give no certain attribution. For Phrygian animals see R. S. Young op. cit. (in note 9) figs. 14, 19, 22, pls. 16-18, 22-24, 28. Note that more than one style of animal carving exists at Gordion: naturalistic and geometric. Are the plastic examples all Phrygian productions, or are some imports from elsewhere? This issue deserves more study. Note that Deller op. cit. (in note 9) 328 ff. gives textual references for Assyrian use of lion-headed vessels during the Sargon period and perhaps later— but not earlier.

¹⁷ Oscar White Muscarella, "The Oriental Origin of Siren Cauldron Attachments", *Hesperia* (1962); H. Volkmar-Herrmann, *Die Kessel der orientalisierenden Zeit*, *Olympische Forschungen Band VI* (Berlin, 1966); R. S. Young op. cit. (in note 9) 108 ff.

¹⁸ U. Jantzen, *Samos VIII* (Bonn, 1972) 71, pl. 73.

¹⁹ C. K. Wilkinson, *Two Ram-headed Vessels from Iran*, Abegg-Stiftung, Bern, 1967) 9, fig. 3: an incised round eye exists on the vessel to the left, although not shown on the drawing.

In addition, thanks to a personal examination by P. Albenda, we now know that an apparent lion-headed situla is carried by a beardless figure on a very eroded relief recovered from a mosque 2.5 km. west of Arslan Tash in North Syria²⁰. Here we see a relatively narrow, elongated situla carried in the figure's right hand. Both Albenda's autopsy and my examination of her close-up photograph with a magnifying glass reveals what appears to be the chin, muzzle and open mouth of a lion. The ethnic identity of the bearer and his companion on the relief (who may be carrying a bucket-situla), as well as his function-attendant? tribute bearer?-remains uncertain; they could be Assyrians.

One more situla should be brought into the discussion. This is an unexcavated bronze ram-headed example in Teheran that is manifestly Assyrian, as is indicated by the style of the hunt scene that decorates its walls²¹.

Bronze and terracotta ram and calf-headed vessels without handles have been excavated in northwest Iran at Hasanlu, dating to the 9th century B.C.²² A gazelle-headed terracotta example comes from Bastam, an Urartian site in northwest Iran, dating to the 7th century B.C.²³ A ram-headed vessel and fragments of two others were excavated at Zincirli in North Syria dating to the first millennium B.C.²⁴ From Assyria have derived three terracotta ram-headed vessels dated to the 8th-7th century B.C., two from Assur, one from Nimrud, one from Khatuniyeh, and two bronze gazelle-headed examples come from Khorsabad²⁵. There are also two unexcavated bronze gazelle-headed examples, one in the Foroughi collection and one in Copenhagen, that are manifestly Assyrian because of the style of their wall decoration; and a fragmentary terracotta vessel in

²⁰ F. Thureau-Dangin, et al., *Arslan Tash* (Paris, 1931) pl. XIII: 2 (Louvre 28490).

²¹ Wilkinson op. cit. (in note 19) fig. 13.

²² E. Porada, *The Art of Ancient Iran* (New York, 1965) pl. 32.

²³ W. Kleiss, "Ein urartäisches Gazellenkopfringgefäß aus Bastam", *AMI* 16 (1973) 91 ff; Calmeyer and S. Kroll in Kleiss op. cit. (in note 16) 195, 201 f.

²⁴ W. Andrae, *Die Kleinfunde von Sindschirli* (Berlin, 1943) 47, pl. 20a, b, d.

²⁵ A. Heller, *Die Gräber und Gräfte von Assur* (Berlin, 1954) pl. 26d; Tuchelt op. cit. (in note 16) 57, no. 1, pl. 7; Wilkinson op. cit. (in note 19) fig. 4; J. Curtis, "Preliminary Report on Excavations at Khirbet Khatuniyeh, 1985", in *Researches on the Antiquities of Saddam Dam Basin Salvage and Other Researches* (Baghdad, 1987) 76, pl. 4; P. Amiet, *La Revue du Louvre* 6 (1969) figs. 21, 22.

Los Angeles is either Assyrian or Assyrianizing²⁶. All three are probably from the 8th-7th century B.C.

To summarize, the archaeological data indicate a wide geographical distribution and formal variance of animal-headed situlae and handleless vessels—Anatolia, northwest Iran, North Syria, Samos, and Assyria. There is a preponderance of Assyrian examples, with ram, lion, and gazelle heads²⁷. Nevertheless, there is no reason to conclude that all animal-headed vessels are of Assyrian manufacture; those from Zincirli, Bastam, some at least from Hasanlu, and perhaps some unexcavated situlae could be non-Assyrian²⁸. And with regard to situlae represented in art, they are depicted borne by several ethnic groups or Volk: by Assyrians, Phrygians, and an unidentified Volk at Khorsabad; by an unknown Zagros Volk on the "Ziwiye" coffin; and by an unidentifiable figure on a North Syrian relief.

The questions raised above, how and why Assyrian situlae occur at Gordion, when they came, and why were they sent to Khorsabad, still remain difficult to answer, all the more so because of their distribution history. The answers come out as more questions. Would the Phrygians have commissioned the manufacture or purchased the situlae locally and presented them to Sargon as a perceived appropriate gift? Did the Phrygians bring the situlae directly from Gordion where they had been acquired by trade or gift-exchange prior to 709 B.C. (along with those retained for the Tumulus MM deposition)? And following upon this question, did the Phrygians acquire them directly from Assyria or from another source? Finally, could the Assyrian sculptors have placed the situlae in the hands of the Phrygians (and the other Volk) because they were familiar objects appreciated by the Assyrians, and not because they were actually brought to Khorsabad?

²⁶ P. Calmeyer, *Datierbare Bronzen aus Luristan und Kirmanshah* (Berlin, 1969) 81, fig. 82; idem op. cit. (in note 16) 196, fig. 3, pls. 45:1, 47:1; P. R. S. Moorey in *Ancient Bronzes, Ceramics, and Seals*, ed. G. Marcoe (Los Angeles, 1981) no. 766.

²⁷ Calmeyer op. cit. (in note 16) 201. Deller op. cit. (in note 9) 344 notes the coincidence of textual and archaeological evidence for the first appearance of lion-headed situlae during the reign of Sargon.

²⁸ The example from Bastam is most probably Urartian, not Assyrian; see here note 23. Wilkinson op. cit. (in note 19) figs. 12, 14, pls. VIII-XII. And note also the two terracotta ram-headed situlae associated with the so-called Ziwiye treasure, A. Godard, *Le Trésor de Ziwiye* (Haarlem, 1950) 68 f., figs. 57, 58: Assyrian or Assyrianizing?

It is difficult to respond yes to one question, and no to the others, for I see no clear answer forthcoming given the lack of contemporary textual information. Archaeologists do not understand fully many of the dynamics involved in ancient exchange, be it gift or tribute, direct or indirect. It is known from neo-Assyrian texts that subject people gave as tribute not only their local productions and produce, but gold, silver, tin, ivory and camels, objects that they themselves acquired by trade or tribute²⁹. That is, they gave the Assyrian king what he wanted and expected. We also know from the later reliefs at Persepolis that the tribute bearers coming from all over the empire bring Achaemenian-style objects as gifts, not objects readily recognizable as indigenous to their homeland³⁰. Is the same mechanism, whatever that was, operating on the Khorsabad reliefs?

Thus, the physical occurrence of bronze Assyrian-style situlae at Gordion and their various representations on the Khorsabad reliefs present archaeologists with an ambiguous picture of Phrygian-Assyrian trade or exchange either in or prior to 709 B.C.³¹.

If we now turn our investigation to other possible candidates for consideration as possible Assyrian imports to Phrygia, we discover that the evidence is meager: a glass omphalos bowl from Tumulus P, and perhaps two bronze embossed omphalos bowls, one from Tumulus P, the other from Tumulus W, all from Gordion³².

The glass bowl is certainly an import at Gordion, because it is non-Phrygian in style, and no other glass occurs in pre-destruction Gordion. Based both on the occurrence of glass finds from Nimrud and the late 8th century B.C. date of Tumulus P, the bowl could have come to Gor-

²⁹ See I. Winter, "Carchemish ŠA KIŠAD PURATTI", *AnatStud* 33(1983) 186 ff.

³⁰ Oscar White Muscarella review of G. Walser, *Die Völkerschaften auf den Reliefs von Persepolis* in *JNES* 28 (1969) 202 ff.; idem, "Excavated and Unexcavated Achaemenian Art", in *Ancient Persia: The Art of an Empire*, ed D. Schmand-Besserat (Udenna, 1980) 27 f.

³¹ Therefore the presence of the situlae at Khorsabad (709 B. C.) cannot as such inform us that those examples preserved in Tumulus MM date to the same time (as gift-exchange), which, if so, would be important information about dating the building of the tumulus post 709 B.C. Their value, of course, is that they help date Tumulus MM to some time within the Sargon period.

³² R. S. Young op. cit. (in note 9) 10, 32, 235, 267, fig. 18 and pl. 15 (P 48); 14 f., fig. 8, pl. 9 (P 11); 204 f., fig. 121 and pl. 89 (W 11).

dion from Assyria in the Sargon period³³. Opinion is not universal concerning the Assyrian origin of the two bronze bowls (I myself am uncertain about an Assyrian origin), although they seem related in form and manufacture to an embossed example from Assur, the well-known bowl inscribed with the name of Assurtaklak of probable 8th or 7th century B.C. date³⁴. If Assyrian, the bowl from Tumulus W, dated ca. 750 B.C. (or earlier to some scholars)³⁵, would have reached Gordion in pre-Sargon times; and the bowl from Tumulus P could have been either an heirloom, a mate to the example from Tumulus W, or could have arrived during the reign of Sargon.

There are then two situlae, one glass bowl, and possibly two bronze imports. And of these, only the situlae, the glass bowl, and one bronze bowl may be considered as possibly having arrived at Gordion during the time of Sargon. In short, the archaeological record in Phrygia yields little evidence, and most of it ambiguous, concerning relations between Phrygia and Assyria— and specifically relating to the momentous alliance between Midas and Sargon. Likewise, the evidence in Assyria is equally ambiguous, aside of course from the important information—revealed by the presence of a fibula— that Phrygians arrived at Khorsabad with tribute/gifts from Midas, most probably in 709 B.C. If it were not for the letter of Sargon recovered at Nimrud, scholars would know precious little, aside from the abrupt references in the Assyrian annals, about Phrygian-Assyrian diplomatic contacts.

³³ von Saldern op. cit. (in note 16) 27 ff.; R. S. Young and Mellink in Young op. cit. (in note 9) 10, 32, 235, 267; Howes-Smith op. cit. (in note 16) 10 f.: cf. Howes-Smith, "A Study of 9th-7th Century Metal Bowls from Western Asia", *IranAntiqua* XXI (1986) 45, 83, who (in a confusing article) shifts the origin to Syria.

³⁴ Oscar White Muscarella, "Fibulae and Chronology, Marlik and Assur", *JFA* 11 (1984) 417 ff. Cf. Howes-Smith 1981 (in note 16) 10, 13 with Howes-Smith 1986 (in note 33) 34 f., 71, n. 187, 72, 84 f. For all we know, the bowls could be Phrygian products or they could have derived from elsewhere in Anatolia— from a culture still archaeologically unknown.

³⁵ Oscar White Muscarella, "King Midas' Tumulus at Gordion", *Quarterly Review of Archaeology* (December, 1982) 8.