

AN IVORY BOX AND A STONE MOULD FROM ACEMHÖYÜK

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The excavations at Acemhöyük, started in 1962 under the auspices of the Turkish Historical Society, Ankara University and the General Directorate of Antiquities and Museums, have been continuing annually. The results of the campaigns of 1962-1965 have appeared¹. More recent exploration has focused on the monumental buildings at the site; some work also took place in other parts of the mound and in the lower city. We now have gained a basic understanding of Acemhöyüks' status and importance in the context of Anatolian archaeology. A general volume, now in preparation, will present the finds from the palaces as well as those from other buildings on the mound or in the lower city; objects of metal, ivories, terracottas, stone vases, and notably the rich collection of bullae with cylinder and stamp seal impressions will be published in this volume. The present article selects two samples from the wealth of material: an ivory box and stone mould for a lead figurine.

An ivory box

Inventory Ac. 0:24, from the NW trench of the mound, season of 1976. This object was found in poor condition in a burnt structure of level III, embedded in ashes on a floor 20 cm. above the stone foundation of the building. The fragments were salvaged with special care; the object was then provisionally restored and reinforced by Fethi Ünlü, restorer of the Archaeological Museum at Ankara. Total height 10.3 cm.; width 7.2 cm.; height of rectangular part 6.5 cm.

The box is made of one piece of ivory. The lower part is nearly cubic in shape, with a concave transition to the round neck; the rim has an inner ledge for a lid. Rivet holes in all four corners of the base indicate that the box was attached to a stand or some

¹ Anadolu (Anatolia) X, 1966, pp. 1-143, Plts. I-XLIV.

other object. The sides of the box each have framing rows of bronze studs set off in gold, and, in addition, a horizontal row of iron and lapis lazuli studs of the same size. The numbers are identical on three faces (B-C-D), viz. six each at top and bottom, five at the sides; for the horizontal row, three iron and two lapis studs are inserted. Face A has four studs in the upper row, the central two enlarged, each with a granulated gold border and a wreath of gold petals in rosette fashion. Each of the four faces of the box is carved in relief; the rows of studs divide the surfaces into eight separate panels (Pl. I-V):

Face A: Upper panel: few of the figures are preserved intact. One can make out, at the right edge, a deer with head reversed to the left; at the upper left, a curled-up animal, a hare (?) parallel to the upper border, a headless lion; below this, a quadruped resembling a gazelle, and the rear of a short-tailed animal. The center of the panel is undecipherable (Pl. II-III).

Lower panel: This is the best preserved of the entire series. The dense design consists of three registers.

Upper register: at the right edge, a male figure is enthroned to the left. The throne has lion's paws and a back with curved finial. The man on the throne holds a wide-bodied, tapering vessel in his right hand, his left rests on his knee. A spear appears behind his left shoulder. His costume leaves one shoulder bare; its lower hem, well below the knees, has a double-beaded edge. Over the man's right arm is a human head, face down. Behind the throne is a small seated human figure, facing left. A procession of seven male figures approaches the enthroned figure. The leading man offers a fish in his right hand. Figures 2 and 4 each carry a yoke from which two vases are suspended by double ropes; these vessels have wide flat rims and wide bodies with round bases. Figures 3 and 5 have yokes with one large fish suspended at each end. Figure 6 is a man walking alongside a male sphinx which he holds by the head. Figure 7, with his left hand, grasps a monkey by the neck. Behind the shoulder of this man is a head turned towards the edge of the box. The spaces between the heads of the offering-bearers are filled by a series of reclining hares; other interstices have tiny fishes and indeterminate filling motifs.

Second register: from right to left: fist, a couchant, horned animal; then three monkeys. A large monkey sits under the throne, head reversed; the next monkey faces right and holds a bird in his left hand; the third monkey raises his arms in support of the upper register, below the feet of offering-bearers 1 and 2. Next come two lions with an antelope in between. The lions and antelope intrude into the upper frieze with their raised heads. Figures 8-11 are goats; 8 stand with forelegs together, horns raised between the sphinx and fish of the upper register. For lack of space the body of goat 11 is turned parallel to the corner edge of the box.

Third register: these figures are in seated or reclining poses. Starting at the right, first a female sphinx with Hathor locks, reclining to the left; next a gazelle, then a lion; both of these animals are shown reclining to the right with heads reversed; the fourth figure, below the second upper lion, is lying on its back, aslant and dead, probably an antelope.

Face B: This face is badly damaged. Traces of animal friezes remain at the right, both above and below.

Face C: Here, preservation is better. Some figures in each of the panels are recognizable; the designs render animals in files or hunting (Pl. IV-V).

Upper panel: this has two registers. Above, six lionesses are walking to the right against a hatched background. Lioness 1 (from the right) is largely lost, 2 is partly preserved (lower body contour, rear paw), 3 is now headless. The register below the lionesses is tightly filled with figures in the manner of face A. We can discern four large lions carrying their prey in their jaws. Aligned with their heads and backs are shapes which may represent dismembered animal victims. A variety of animal figures appears below the paws of the lions.

Lower panel: this shows the same stylistic traits. Although there are no formal dividing lines, the division in registers is clear. The upper register has a dense file of sheep; the lower, lions hunting and sharing their prey. From right to left: two confronted lions, each with one forepaw raised, are devouring an ox head. Below, in the middle, a gazelle with head raised. Four lions approach from the left, treading on gaping animals which must be victims.

Face D: The traces preserved on this face show that one of the subjects again showed lions out hunting.

On all four faces of the box, the background is hatched obliquely and the figures stand out in low relief. This is seen best in the uncrowded file of lionesses on face C. On face A, the lower background of the offering-bearers and the small interstices among the animals of the lower registers are filled with hatching.

The seated figure may be interpreted as a king. His tall hat resembles the headgear of the ivory figure of a prince from Ras Shamra². The double-beaded edges on the hem of his costume again have parallels at Ras Shamra viz. in the border of the queen's costume on the carved bed-panels³. Close relatives of the lion throne appear on seals of Kanish Karum Ib and Old Syrian seals⁴. The costumes of the offering-bearers have no exact parallel, but the oblique fringe over the left leg to some extent recalls the costume of the statuette of Laasgan from Mari and that of the fisherman in the paintings of room 132 in the palace of Mari⁵. The nude torsos of the offering-bearers and the carrying of offerings on yokes are paralleled on Syrian seals⁶.

Among the animals lions are the most prominent. The lionesses on face C, upper part, are rendered naturalistically with strong legs and well-proportioned bodies. Their tails are curled up into spirals. The lions are similarly proportioned but more powerful. Their mouths are shut on their prey, but other seated and walking lions are shown with mouths half-open. The mane starts near the ear and

² *Annales archéologique syrienne* 4-5, 1954-55, p. 151 (C. F. A. Schaeffer); C. F. A. Schaeffer, *Ugaritica* IV, 1962, p. 25; H. B. Safadi, *Les Annales archéologique syrienne* 13, 1963, p. 97; Winfried Orthmann, *Der alte Orient (Propyläen Kunstgeschichte*, 14, pl. XLVII, p. 480; Paolo Matthiae).

³ C. F. A. Schaeffer, *Syria* 31, 1954, pl. VIII-X; W. A. Ward, *Syria* 46, 1969, p. 225 ff.

⁴ N. Özgüç, *Kaniş Karumu Ib katı mühürleri ve mühür baskıları (Seals and seal impressions of Level Ib from Karum Kanish)* Ankara, 1968, pl. XI, C; D. G. Hogarth, *Hittite Seals*, Oxford, 1920, pl. VI, 166.

⁵ André Parrot, *Mission Archéologique de Mari II, Le Palais, Documents et Monuments*, Paris, 1959, pl. XII, Fig. 10, p. 15-14; André Parrot, *Mission Archéologique de Mari II, Le Palais, Peintures murales*, Paris, 1958 pl. XIX, Fig. 57, p. 81. ff.

⁶ Edith Porada, *Corpus of Ancient Near Eastern seals in North American Collections*, 1948, pl. CXXXVII, 910.

descends to the forelegs. The neck is often hatched lengthwise. Similar natural, lively renderings of lions, bodies linear stylization of mane and spiral tails occur on Syrian seals of the 18th century B. C.⁷ But the lions on the lower panel have different stylistic peculiarities. The details of their faces and the rendering of their mane are similar to those of ivory lions and sphinxes from Acemhöyük⁸.

The box from Acemhöyük, with its bronze, iron and lapis lazuli studs and its finely carved, lively and crowded friezes takes a unique place in the Near Eastern ivory carving. This makes it difficult to determine its place of origin. In the above frequently cited Old Syrian, and some Anatolian parallels, we have leading clues that this object may have been sent from northern Syria or, southeast Anatolia where Syrian and Anatolian cultures meet, e. g. from Carchamish, the city of Aalahanda who is known to have maintained such close relations with Acemhöyük.

The ivory box was found on a floor of level III, (counting down from the surface). This level everywhere on the mound is contemporary with the palaces. Thus our box must date no later than the 18th century B. C.

Mould for a lead figurine

Acemhöyük Inv. No. 1:85. Stone mould. Length 7.6 cm, width 6.6 cm, thickness 3.1 cm. Limestone with slight admixture of sand and clay. From the lower city, trench B, level III, used as a wedge stone in a wall. The left side and the edges of the decorated face are missing. The back is uneven.

The front of this stone shows the seated figure of a lyreplayer. His seat is rectangular and three-legged; along the top and at right angles to this is a ladder pattern. The figure holds a five-stringed lyre with both hands. His costume is long, with stripes and zigzags as borders of the skirt. The head is missing, but the beard remains with triple pointed contours. The exact lines of body and hips are lost because of surface damage to the mould, but one may read the

⁷ E. Porada, *Ibid.* pl. CXLVIII, 978.

⁸ N. Özgüç, *Acemhöyük Kazıları (Anadolu X)*, Lev. XIX, 1; C. Decamps de Mertenfeld, *Inventaire commenté des Ivoires Phéniciens et apparentés découverts dans le Proche-Orient*, Paris 1954, pl. CXXVI; P. O. Harper, *Dating a group of ivories from Anatolia*, Fig. 3, 4, 8 (*The Connoisseur*, Special Commemorative Issue: Centennial of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, November 1969).

shape of the body as triangular to the waist. The arms rise from the shoulders with high curves and are bent at the elbows; each arm has one bracelet. The rectangular box of the lyre has a bull's head at the upper left corner. The five strings are attached in a rectangular plaque at the base. The sides of the lyre are double-curved; the instrument rests on the knees of the musician who holds the upper curved frame in his right hand, the lower in his left (Pl. VI-VII).

The musician fills the entire mould. We have no stylistic detail for his face, but the lines of the beard and the high curves of the arms at the shoulders are traits also seen in a lead figurine-group from Acemhöyük level IV and in one⁹ from Kültepe now in the Louvre. The mould ends where the beard comes to the chin; here the mould is intact. Since the legs of the throne stand on the ground and there is room for the missing parts of the musician's feet, the maker of the mould must have started carving the design at the bottom, running out of space when he came to the head of the lyre-playing figure and the upper part of the lyre. The incomplete mould must have been discarded and thus came to be used as a wedge stone. The useless mould may have been made in the period of level III or IV. In either case it belongs to the apogee of the Assyrian Trade Colonies period. The upper level of trench B in the lower city belongs to this period; the waterlogged fourth level represents an earlier stage of the Colony period.

The most important element in the design of the mould is the double curved, five-stringed lyre with bull's head. A similar instrument, but without bull's head, appears on a cylinder seal¹⁰ from Tarsus showing a musician squatting among animals; no other contemporary parallels occur. The Tarsus seal is unstratified, but the rendering of its figures has many parallels¹¹ on local style seals from Kanish Karum II. This leads us to date the Tarsus seal to about the period of the Acemhöyük mould, 19 th - 18 th centuries B. C.

⁹ Anadolu, X Lev. XXIV; D. Opitz, *Altorientalische Gussformen* (Festschrift von Oppenheim, 1933, s. 194, Lev. VII, 9; AfO, Beiheft I) Syria, X, p. 2, Fig. 1.

¹⁰ Hetty Goldman, *Excavations at Gözlükule, Tarsus II*, Princeton, 1956, p. 239, pl. 394, 35; 400 35.; E. Porada, a lyre player from Tarsus and its relations (The Aegean and the Near East, studies presented to Hetty Goldman, New York) p. 204, Fig. j.

¹¹ Nimet Özgüç, *Kültepe Mühür baskılarında Anadolu Grubu* (The Anatolian Group of cylinder seal impressions from Kültepe, Ankara 1965, pl. XXX.