

LAYISH NEWSLETTER 2014

By the end of this year, four catalogues out of the eight Lion and Prey compositional types will have been posted on this website (**Chapters 5-8** at Level 3, accessed through the central squares of Level 1 (Home Page) and Level 2) - meaning we will have reached the half-way mark in processing the evidence collected. Those of you who like reading encyclopaedias and train timetables will find reading them page by page rewarding, as I get better at doing it, especially as I start dropping hints on meanings as my thinking develops (I hope). Also the artefacts of the main period covered in each catalogue start to mutually match up and confirm each other as the big picture starts to emerge.

Just a reminder: I set out to prove the meaning of the Lion attacking Prey in ancient near-eastern art, thinking it would be a neat PhD solvable in three years. As I started to collect instances of its use, to my supervisor's horror I found it led back to the Fifth Millennium BC, and that it is often juxtaposed with several other common images in ancient near eastern art. I came to some early conclusions and two hypotheses which are hinted at even within the catalogue material - but like weaving a carpet from the centre, I could not work on all sides simultaneously, though I drew up an overall structure for the book 's chapters (listed on the Layish Home Page on the left). But how could I write them without first looking at all the evidence? This is why its division into 8 compositional types and their judicious seriation had to be the first stage in building up my case - during which time I had to abandon my supervisor, and enlist your interest in this adventure instead. He was, among other things, a coin expert, and when In **Catalogue D** I recently came to a cluster of them dating from the 5-3C BC (see examples below from an Anatolia) my approach really justified itself because they were all from places in the Levant where they already had a tradition of using the lion-prey motif from the Second Millennium. If my perspective had only been that of a Classical archaeologist I would have missed that crucial pointer to iconographical continuity over the centuries in the same locations.



Coins from Tarsus, Cilicia, with statue of enthroned Baal on the verso - British Museum

When I started this venture one would have to use actual photographs stuck into the pages: in intervening years pictures began to be scannable (at some expense still) and incorporated into the text - until finally by 2014 I have inexpensive hardware and software, even to enhance bad originals where before I would have to resort to tracings or drawings - and I can share it all on a website without having to print it, making the project increasingly feasible, instead of financially crippling

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(meaning I had to waste time doing a day job). Since picture processing is now so speedy I can use more of them, rather than leaving it to you from cited references to look them up in hundreds of different books which no one library is likely to have altogether - during which time you will have lost the thread of my argument. To me it is a courtesy that, where possible, if discussing an artefact it should be in front of the reader: for an art historian it is a basic tool of their trade now to have a printer-scanner with Photoshop or similar, meaning they can do away with unnecessary verbal description, leaving the image to speak for itself, and making my aim of proving the existence of the *CANEA* possible, given I have to make my case, not through written documents, but through artefacts! I hope it will lay the ground for others to build upon as a key trend in understanding ancient near-eastern art.

OVERVIEW OF ALL THE CATALOGUES

Anyone wishing to understand the reasoning behind my developing conclusions ideally should follow my trail in the order I followed it. In compiling the first four catalogues (**Chapters 5-8**) in due order, the evidence reached different crescendos, its sifting proceeding as quite an adventure. As it became clear I was dealing with the imagery of ancient astronomy I had to take time off the catalogues to write **Chapter 19** that deals with *Astronomy (in the Age of Taurus)*. When I come to work on the second four catalogues I will similarly need to branch off to take time to write **Chapter 20** to focus on *Astronomy in the Age of Aries* for the context of material dating 1450-300 BC.

As I worked on each catalogue, the implications of the lion-prey group has unfolded like a detective story, and each one has provided new twists on initial assumptions - as well as unexpected proofs on sometimes out-of-the-way objects. Where possible, catalogue entries use provenanced objects, with related unprovenanced items compared under them. The principal artefacts are prefaced by a small table summarising key information such as find-spot, object type, material, find and/or museum numbers, principal publication source - and date (precise or approximate). Abbreviations used (particularly for key books or papers) will finally be given in the Bibliography at the end of the whole book which (I apologise) I will not be able to post until the end of the whole work - but I have as a temporary measure given key Seal Catalogue abbreviations at the end of the revised **Catalogue A**, and will do so for the others in future.

There are controversies over dating for some periods in the ancient world, some of which have been fine-tuned by scientific dating methods. There may, therefore, be discrepancies in dating between catalogues due to authors' individual interpretation or difference of scientific method which can never be completely ironed out. In the **Synthesised Catalogue** (which can be posted only when all 8 are completed), as each catalogue was added further calibration was needed, mostly based on stylistic similarities or the obvious provenance of different compositional types from the same site - but, as my intellectual grasp matured, it was not always possible to go back and revise earlier catalogues. In the end, the overall picture that emerges in the **SYNTHESES** quarter of this work (**Chapters 13-16**) will be sufficient basis for filling out the broad blocks of

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timing already apparent in *Catalogue A*, and to arrive at firm conclusions in the final few chapters dealing with the history of interpretations, ending with my own. It has become clear from working on *Catalogues A-D* that several layers of meaning devolved from the primary astronomical level.

✪ *Catalogue A: the Belly Landing* has (with *Catalogue H*) the smallest sample of material. This was a simple catalogue to compile, and being at the beginning of my research, it was a test piece for arriving at how best to present the material on each compositional type. Its *Chronological Focus* deals with the Protohistoric period - important also for *Catalogue B* - that has over the last decades been vastly opened up by the *DAI* excavations at Abydos which has enabled them to synchronize Predynastic Egypt more closely with the Susa and Uruk periods in Mesopotamia.

In fact, given its impact on the sorting of similar material in the later catalogues, just recently I went back to *Catalogue A* to fine-tune the entire catalogue in the light, not only of an Oxford Radio Carbon-Dating conference I attended in 2014, but also because several new pieces had emerged which needed to be included, giving a much fuller picture for the Second Millennium in particular (the corrected version is being posted at the same time as this newsletter). Of all the items I took photographs of in the British Museum, when I went back to take better pictures, *not one of them* was still on display! To those of you doing a PhD, this is a big lesson - whatever records you are making, make them reliable enough at the time you are collecting to be able to use them in the future, because they might just disappear - as if they had never existed! The original version of *Catalogue A* used many drawings, some being tracings from bad photographs. Even if unable to re-photograph, at least with improvements in software I have in many cases now been able to insert enhanced versions of my original photos to provide a clearer record of the original. Overall, I was able to replace some of the line drawings/tracings that made up almost the entire catalogue at that time - though in some cases I have put in both.

Although I came back to it to correct obvious errors of fact and formatting, as my initial foray into dealing with the subject it was inevitably experimental and when I went through the first version, it came over as pretty basic and naïve which hindsight and the insertion of fuller information has - perhaps deliberately - not completely ironed out. For instance, I was strict about keeping other images in the *Canon of Ancient Near Eastern Art (CANEA)* associated with the lion attack separate - the juxtapositions to be looked at later. On revamping the catalogue I decided mostly to leave it that way, leaving the few, sparse examples to stand out as lone stepping stones across history in a bald chronological layout without distraction. But in the following catalogues it seemed better not to weed them out, especially since in the case of seals it is just not possible, so that on balance they stay in as a foretaste of the full *CANEA* cycle discussion in later chapters.

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- ⊛ **Catalogue B: the Uruk Stance** is in many ways the most telling compositional type, developed in Uruk, star proto-urban city of **Catalogue A's Chronological Focus**. In it, it is the astronomical interpretation of Persepolis as calendrical observatory that emerges as the centrepiece, the artefacts associated with it setting down strong bench marks from which to read contemporary and ensuing material in the Greek world in later catalogues, whose Persian connections are often overlooked.
- ⊛ **Catalogue C: the Rear Attack**, closely related to the Uruk Stance, as it proceeded gradually developed into a special study of 2M Syrian seals, and is an important step forward for two reasons. 2M Syrian seals form the foundation for understanding Minoan artefacts in **Catalogue D**, and it also required investigation in depth into the iconography of the story of Baal and Ishtar in the Levant. The other main aspect of Syrian seals concerned with officialdom and making agreements and treaties was also explored - though they were traditions of the Syro-Mesopotamian world the Aegean world did not adopt. This time Mari and surrounding Syrian cities like Ebla - with their wealth of informative written records - provided the central stage set for the material pursued under our *Chronological Focus*. I extracted three sections from this catalogue in Spectra Newsletters 1-3 on my Home Page.
- ⊛ **Catalogue D: the Back Lunge**, as analysis progressed, unexpectedly ended up with Knossos as the star cult site as trails of evidence (mostly seals) emanating from it came into prominence in some profusion. There was sufficient critical mass of material within the *Chronological Focus* to build on pointers from the previous three catalogues to start to spot the pattern of, and pin down, at least the most obvious components in the mainline **Canon of Ancient Near Eastern Art (CANEA)**. Further images adapted, invented or borrowed from the Syro-Anatolian world by the Minoans threw up a host of further astronomical images standing out to be counted - much of it underpinned by the metatext of their version of the Baal-Ishtar story in its calendrical connotations. Thus in the *Iconography* section I begin to commit to more precise naming of **CANEA** member images, with the lion-prey group at its heart. This Catalogue will be posted by December 2014 - I think you will find it revealing. Due to interruptions by building work on my apartment, this is the one that took the longest.

When I overhauled **Catalogue A** I was a little shocked to find it was less than 50 pages long. Even contemplating the overhaul of **Catalogue B** next year is not daunting, which nearly reaches 150 pages. It is the Second Millennium foci of **Catalogues C** and **D** that have led to almost a doubling in catalogue length, partly due to the great surge of evidence in that period for the Rear Attack and Back Lunge, but partly, also, because we needed to look in depth from several angles at their iconography. **Catalogues E: The Forward Attack** and **F: the Bilateral Attack** will also have a large amount of evidence in them, where our prime focus moves between the end of the 2M and into the entire First Millennium, with many new revelations. However, **Catalogues G: The Crossover**

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Attack and *H: Maneater* will be very small, and more a matter of crossing t's and dotting i's: they are worth including because some of them bring in new territory important to the overall picture.

Hoping this introduction to the Catalogues has given you a map of what to expect, why not have a look at them and get hooked into this subject?

Previous newsletters can be accessed on link 1-3 below:
each past newsletter will be archived under
individually numbered links, the current one always on
here.



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