

# THE ARCHITECTURAL ORIGIN OF MESOPOTAMIAN STANDARDS IN LATE URUK/JEMDET NASR PERIOD ICONOGRAPHY\*

RENATE MARIAN VAN DIJK-COOMBES  
*rmvandijk@hotmail.com*  
*Stellenbosch University*  
*Stellenbosch, South Africa*

## **Summary: The Architectural Origin of Mesopotamian Standards in Late Uruk/Jemdet Nasr Period Iconography**

This paper aims to demonstrate that, according to the iconographic evidence, standards had their origins in the late Uruk/Jemdet Nasr Period as *architectural* standards. A variety of different standards are depicted in relation to architecture. Some of these standards were also represented as signs in the archaic Uruk script, and this can offer further insight into their meaning or relevance. Each of the late Uruk/Jemdet Nasr standards is discussed in turn.

**Keywords:** Uruk/Jemdet Nasr – Standard – Architecture

## **Resumen: El origen arquitectónico de los estandartes en la iconografía del periodo Uruk/Jemdet Nasr tardío**

Este trabajo busca demostrar que, de acuerdo a la evidencia iconográfica, los estandartes tuvieron su origen en el periodo Uruk/Jemdet Nasr tardío como estandartes *arquitectónicos*. Una variedad de diferentes estandartes se representa en relación con la arquitectura. Algunos de estos estandartes son también representados como signos en la escritura arcaica de Uruk, y esto puede ofrecer más información sobre su significado o relevancia. Se discutirán sucesivamente cada uno de los estandartes del Uruk/Jemdet Nasr tardío.

**Palabras clave:** Uruk/Jemdet Nasr – Estandarte – Arquitectura

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## INTRODUCTION

In Mesopotamian iconography, standards are first attested during the late Uruk Period or Jemdet Nasr Period (3300–2900 BCE),<sup>1</sup> and continue to be depicted throughout Mesopotamian history. The most famous type of standard is the battle standard, and as such, many previous studies have focused exclusively on this type of standard.<sup>2</sup> This though is not the only type of standard or the only function which a standard can have. B. Pongratz-Leisten<sup>3</sup> identifies six different types or functions of standards: [1] divine standards (standards associated with a specific deity), [2] royal standards, [3] standards in a ritual context, [4] standards in judicial procedures, [5] battle standards, and [6] standards in an architectural context. To this can be added a seventh type, [7] the city standard, associated with the primary political unit of the third and fourth millennia BCE. In fact, T. Jacobsen<sup>4</sup> theorised that the writing of several city names were originally pictures “of a symbol ... affixed to a stake for carrying”—in short, a standard. These seven types or functions of standards are not necessarily mutually exclusive. For example, the standards on the Victory Stele of Naram-Sin<sup>5</sup> are clearly battle standards because they are associated directly with the fighting, but they may also be associated with a particular deity, city-state or perhaps both of these, and therefore also represent a divine standard or a city standard.<sup>6</sup> The aim of this study is to demonstrate that, according to the visual repertoire, standards found their origin in an architectural setting.

<sup>1</sup> The Jemdet Nasr Period is sometimes seen not as a separate archaeological period, but as another name for Uruk III (*e.g.* Woods 2010: 35). Due to the problems with the terminology and chronology of the archaeological phases—for these problems, see H. Crawford (2004: 18–19, 23–25) and U. Finkbeiner and W. Röellig (1986)—, and the difficulties and ambiguities in differentiating between the two periods, they will be treated here as one. Although the term “Uruk” will be used throughout for convenience, it is noted that the majority of pieces discussed come from the end of the Uruk Period, or the Jemdet Nasr Period.

<sup>2</sup> See for example R. Mayer-Opificius (1996), F. Sarre (1903) and J. Vidal (2009).

<sup>3</sup> Pongratz-Leisten 2011–2013: 107–110.

<sup>4</sup> Jacobsen 1967: 101.

<sup>5</sup> Louvre Sb 4. For photographs of this piece, see J. Börker-Klähn (1982: Nr. 261-k).

<sup>6</sup> See van Dijk (2016b) for more on the standards on the Victory Stele of Naram-Sin.

The Shorter Oxford 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 and army.”<sup>7</sup> U. Seidl’s definition of a standard as a “Stange mit daran befestigten Zeichen, die aufgestellt oder getragen werden kann”<sup>8</sup> accepts the “flag or figurehead” of the Shorter Oxford Dictionary as only part of a standard. Similarly, Szarzyńska<sup>9</sup> identifies three components of a standard: [1] a high shaft, [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 securing the emblem to the shaft. During the Uruk Period, standards did not always have an emblem surmounting the shaft, but rather they had decoration at the side. They can still be identified as standards, at least in the iconographic record, by comparison with standards from later periods, as well as by their function.








That at least some of the standards had the dual function of being both architectural standards and divine standards is made clear by comparison to signs in the archaic Uruk script. During the Uruk Period, standards are found not only in the visual repertoire, but also in the archaic Uruk script from Uruk III and Uruk IV, and these signs can give us a better understanding of the standards in the iconographic record. Their appearance in the two sources though is different—not all standards found as signs in the archaic Uruk script are found in the iconographic record and vice versa (see **Table 1**). The standards found in the iconographic record are the ring-post with streamer, the ring-post without streamer, the *Doppelvolute*, the ringed pole, the *Bügelschaft*, the knobbed pole and the floral/star standard. Only four of these are represented in the archaic Uruk script. The ring-post with streamer, the ring-post without streamer, the ringed pole and the *Bügelschaft* are represented by the signs **MUŠ3**, **LAGAR**, **NUN** and **ŠEŠ** and **URI3**

<sup>7</sup> Brown 2002: 3000.

<sup>8</sup> Seidl 2011–2013: 111, “a rod with an attached sign which can be placed or carried.”

<sup>9</sup> Szarzyńska 1996: 1.

respectively.<sup>10</sup> Other signs in the archaic Uruk script which appear to represent standards which are not found in the iconographic record are **ADAB**,<sup>11</sup> **GEŠTU**,<sup>12</sup> **NIR**<sup>13</sup> and **KALAM**.<sup>14</sup>

STANDARD IN THE ICONOGRAPHIC RECORD	SIGN IN THE ARCHAIC URUK SCRIPT (URUK IV)
 (1) Ring-Post with Streamer	 <b>MUŠ3</b>
 (2) Ring-Post without Streamer	 <b>LAGAR</b>
 (3) <i>Doppelvolute</i>	
 (4) Ringed Pole	 <b>NUN</b>




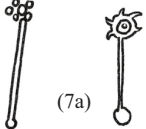



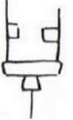

<sup>10</sup> For more on these signs and on the relationships between the standards in the iconographic record and the signs in the archaic Uruk script, see the sections dealing with the individual standards below.

<sup>11</sup> Falkenstein 1936: Sign Nos. 305–307; Green and Nissen 1987: Sign No. 19. It is perhaps surprising that the crescent standard, represented by the sign **ADAB** in the archaic Uruk script, is unknown from Uruk Period iconography in Mesopotamia. There are three examples from this period of the crescent standard from Susiana in modern-day Iran. These are a seal impression on a clay bulla from Susa (Sb 1957, see P. Amiet 1980: Pl. 17.282 for a line drawing reconstruction), and two seal impressions from Chogha Mish—see P. P. Delagouz and H.J. Kantor (1996: Pl. 151B and Pl. 154B) for line drawings of these two seal impressions. This may suggest that the crescent standard, well-known in later Mesopotamian iconography, had its origins outside Mesopotamia.

<sup>12</sup> Falkenstein 1936: Sign Nos. 291, 298–300; Green and Nissen 1987: Sign Nos. 203a & 203b.

<sup>13</sup> Falkenstein 1936: Sign Nos. 302–304; Green and Nissen 1987: Sign No. 414.

<sup>14</sup> Falkenstein 1936: Sign No. 607; Green and Nissen 1987: Sign No. 282.

 <p><i>Bügelschaft</i> (5)</p>	 <p>ŠEŠ URI3</p>
 <p>Knobbed Pole (6)</p>	
 <p>Floral/Star Standard (7a) (7b)</p>	
 <p>Crescent Standard (Proto-Elamite) (8)</p>	 <p>ADAB</p>
	 <p>GEŠTU (a) GEŠTU (b)</p>
	 <p>NIR</p>
	 <p>KALAM</p>

**Table 1**

Types of standards represented in late Uruk/Jemdet Nasr Period iconography and in the archaic Uruk script [(1) IM 18828, after Braun-Holzinger 2007: Taf. 11 FS16 (detail); (2) Klq 17, after Heinrich 1957:11 Abb. 2 (detail); (3) after Legrain 1936:Pl. 20.389 (detail); (4) W 22419,1, after Rova 1994: Tav. 45.751 (detail); (5) Aleppo Museum, after Rova 1994: Tav. 3.40 (detail); (6) Iraq Museum, after Frankfort 1955: Pl. 82.872 (detail); (7a) NBC 5989, after Buchanan 1981:59 Catalogue Number 169 (detail); (7b) Morgan Seal 21, after Porada 1948: Pl. IV.21 (detail); (8) Chogha Mish after Delougaz and Kantor 1996:Pl. 154B (detail). Signs from the archaic Uruk script are all from Green and Nissen 1987.]

The iconographic evidence shows that during the Uruk Period architectural structures were built of two materials—reed and mudbrick—and these play a significant role with regards to the standards of this period. These two materials appear to have been used predominantly but not necessarily exclusively in the construction of different types of buildings—reed structures appear to have been primarily associated with animal byres, while mudbrick structures appear to have been used predominantly for activities involving humans, mostly related to the cult. The reed structures are depicted with rounded rooves and often have horizontal stripes indicating the reeds used to build the structure. The mudbrick buildings have flat rooves and often appear to have decorative patterns. As will also become evident, standards were associated with architecture in three different ways—they could be attached to a building, they could flank a building, or they could be representative of a building.

Each individual type of standard will be discussed in turn, focusing, where relevant, on its association with the archaic Uruk script and on the manner in which its association with architecture is represented in the iconographic record.

### THE RING-POST WITH STREAMER

Perhaps the most famous example of a standard from the Uruk Period is the ring-post with streamer which is depicted on the Warka Vase (**Fig. 1**).<sup>15</sup> The ring-post with streamer appears as a bundle of reeds which has been folded over at the top to form a loop, with a “streamer” of the loose ends of the stalks of reeds hanging down from this loop.<sup>16</sup> In the archaic Uruk script the ring-post with streamer can be identified as the sign

<sup>15</sup> Iraq Museum IM 19606. For photographs of the Vase, see E. Heinrich (1936: Taf. 2–3), and for a line drawing of the entire scene depicted on the Vase, see Heinrich (1936: Taf. 38).

<sup>16</sup> P. Steinkeller (1998; 2017: 84 n.230) argues using Early Dynastic III textual evidence that the ring-post with streamer represents a scarf, shawl or headband which was attached to the top of a pole. This argument ignores the repeated association in the contemporary Uruk Period visual repertoire of the ring-post with streamer with architecture and the clear depictions of standards being made of reed.

**MUŠ3**,<sup>17</sup> which when found together with the divine indicator represented Inanna.<sup>18</sup> In the visual repertoire, the ring-post with streamer should therefore also represent this goddess or be associated with her.



**Fig. 1.**

The upper register of the Warka Vase with two ring-posts with streamers symbolising the sacred space and architecture (after Schroer and Keel 2005: 291 Abb. 192 detail).

In the upper register of the Warka Vase, the Priest-King or En figure<sup>19</sup> approaches a female figure who can be identified as either Inanna herself or as a priestess of this goddess<sup>20</sup> by the two ring-posts with streamers behind her. These two ring-posts with streamers indi-

<sup>17</sup> Falkenstein 1936: Sign Nos. 208–209; Green and Nissen 1987: Sign No. 374.

<sup>18</sup> Falkenstein 1936: 59.

<sup>19</sup> These two terms, “Priest-King” and “En,” are often used interchangeably, as for example by D. Schmandt-Besserat (2007: 42). However, for problems with the term “Priest-King” and its association with the En, see C. Suter (2014: 554–555) and P. Michalowski (1997: 100). See W. W. Hallo (1957: 3–10) for a philological discussion on the term “En.” See also recently Steinkeller (2017: 82–104) for both the Priest-King and the En title. In some works the figure is identified rather by his appearance and the net skirt which is peculiar to him, as for example “Man in net kilt” (Steinkeller 1999: 104), “Mann im Netzrock” (Blocher 2013: 84; Strommenger 2008: 3) or “Netzrockmann” (Strommenger 1962: 54). Despite the problems with terminology, it is clear that this figure was the ruler of Uruk during this period.

<sup>20</sup> The uncertainty over whether this figure represents Inanna herself or a female associated with her is reflected in the caution with which scholars have discussed her. For example, E. Braun-Holzinger (2007: 9, 9 n.7) first favours an identification with Inanna, although conceding that she may represent a priestess. Later, though, she (Braun-Holzinger 2013: 33) avoids answering the question of her identity by stating that “der zweizipflige, teilweise zerstörte Kopfputz zeigt ihre besonder Stellung an—Göttin oder Priesterin” (the two-pointed, partially destroyed headdress indicates her special position—goddess or priestess). Her identity is usu-

cate the entrance to a sacred space, or temple, with the objects behind them representing temple inventory. A series of cylinder seals from the *Kleinfunde* from the Eanna Precinct at Uruk depict abbreviated versions of this scene.<sup>21</sup> The ring-post with streamer is depicted on four of these seals. On three of these it is touched by the female figure, further stressing the association between the two, while on the fourth it stands in the field. On another seal now housed in the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin<sup>22</sup> two vases, representing the two Warka Vases,<sup>23</sup> are similarly meant to be inside the sacred space of Inanna as indicated by the two ring-posts with steamers on either side of the vases. In these examples no architecture is actually depicted, instead, the ring-posts with streamers are representative or symbolic of the sacred space—the sacred architecture.

This relationship between the ring-post with streamer and architecture is made more explicit on examples such as the limestone trough now in the British Museum<sup>24</sup> and stone vessel in the Vorderasiatisches Museum<sup>25</sup> in which the ring-post with streamer is affixed directly to the

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ally argued based on the headdress she wears, with the horned headdress being typically associated with divinity. However, the headdress worn by this figure is no longer complete as the piece of the vase above the figure was broken in antiquity and, according to Z. Bahrani (2002: 17) it can therefore not be identified with certainty as the divine headdress. Still, the headdress is peculiar to this figure and her having an individual and unique iconography is indicative of her having an important status. Whatever her identity, her association with the ring-posts with streamers argues for her association with the goddess Inanna.

<sup>21</sup> There are five such seals—BM 116721, VA 11041, VA 11042, IM 18830 and IM 18831. See Heinrich (1936: Taf. 17.d and Taf. 18.a-d) for photographs of impressions from these cylinder seals. The scenes on these seals include the male and female figures from the Warka Vase, as well as the two Warka Vases (see n. 23 for more on the second Warka Vase). A magnesite seal of unknown origin now housed in Dresden (no museum number, see W. Andrae 1933: Taf. II.c for a photograph of this seal) and a marble seal from Uruk now in the Iraq Museum (IM 41187, see Braun-Holzinger 2007: Taf. 11 FSa5A for a photograph of this seal) may also represent abbreviated versions of the scene depicted on the Warka Vase, although on these seals the female figure is not depicted, but rather the male figure and temple inventory.

<sup>22</sup> VA 10537. For a photograph of the impression of this seal, see A. Nöldeke (1934: Taf. 29.a).

<sup>23</sup> That the Warka Vase was originally one of a pair is made clear by the repeated depiction of two such vases in the iconographic record. The second Warka Vase survives as just one fragment, now housed in the Vorderasiatisches Museum (VA 8792). For a photograph of this piece, see Heinrich (1936: Taf. 4.a).

<sup>24</sup> BM 120000; VA 8768. For photographs of this trough, see Andrae 1930: Abb. 1–3.



sheep pen and cattle byre which it surmounts. The ring-post with streamer may also flank a building, as for example on a seal impression on a tablet in the Goucher Collection<sup>26</sup> in which human figures appear to be walking in a procession with votive objects towards a temple. More commonly, the ring-post with streamer flanks buildings which are associated with herds or flocks, as for example on a black basalt cylinder seal of unknown provenance now in the Louvre<sup>27</sup> and a white marble cylinder seal from the Shara Temple at Tell Agrab now in the Iraq Museum.<sup>28</sup> These examples may suggest that depictions of herds or flocks associated with ring-posts with streamers<sup>29</sup> reflect a similar iconographic concept, and that the ring-posts in these latter examples, like those on the Warka Vase and related seals, are meant to be representative or symbolic of an architectural structure.

What becomes noticeable is that when the ring-post with streamer is attached directly to a building, these buildings are reed structures, while when flanking a buildings, these buildings appear to be mudbrick structures. This contradicts the traditional interpretation of the ring-post with streamer<sup>30</sup> as a door- or gate-post of a reed hut<sup>31</sup> in which a pole with a reed mat would have been inserted through the rings of a ring-post on either side of a door. Heinrich<sup>32</sup> already contended that in the iconographic record when the ring-post is directly associated with a building it has nothing to do with a door. It could be argued that when the ring-post with streamer is symbolic of architecture, that it is specifically the entrance to the sacred space which is being represented, but it is more likely that these examples are symbol-

<sup>25</sup> VA 7236. For photographs of this vessel, see Andrae 1930: Abb. 4–6.

<sup>26</sup> Now in the Yale Babylonian Collection, Goucher College Collection 869. For a reconstruction of the seal impression, see B.L. Goff and B. Buchanan (1965: Pl. XIX Fig. 4).

<sup>27</sup> MNB 1166. For a photograph of this seal, see H. Frankfort (1939: Pl. VIIId).

<sup>28</sup> IM 31400. For a photograph of this seal, see Frankfort (1955: Pl. 80.854).

<sup>29</sup> Such as a green serpentine cylinder seal now in the Pierpont Morgan Collection (Morgan Seal 5). For a photograph of this seal, see E. Porada (1948: Pl. II.5) and a white chalcedony seal from the Kleinfunde at Uruk now in the Vorderasiatisches Museum (VA 11043). For a photograph of this seal, see Heinrich (1936: Taf. 19.a).

<sup>30</sup> As well as the ring-post without streamer, discussed below.

<sup>31</sup> E.g. Andrae 1933: 21–25; van Buren 1945: 43.

<sup>32</sup> Heinrich 1957: 32–33.

ic of the sacred building as a whole. Furthermore, the reed structures associated with standards in the iconographic record are byres for the housing of animals, while the mudbrick buildings appear to be temples or other religious buildings. Because temple inventory is depicted alongside the standards representing buildings, it is therefore most likely that the buildings symbolised by the standards would have been temples, and therefore mudbrick structures. It is illogical that a door- or gate-post—a fundamental architectural element—of a mudbrick structure would have been made of reed. It follows then that the ring-posts, clearly associated with architecture, would have formed non-essential, most likely decorative, elements of the structures, and there is no reason not to take the iconographic evidence at face value—that the ring-posts flanked buildings and surmounted them. Because **MUŠ3** represented Inanna in the archaic Uruk script, the ring-post with streamer may indicate that the buildings with which it is associated in the iconographic record were all associated with this goddess.

### THE RING-POST WITHOUT STREAMER AND THE *DOPPELVOLUTE*

The ring-post without streamer differs in appearance from the ring-post with streamer in that there is no “streamer” hanging from the base of the loop at the top of the standard, and it is therefore shaped similarly to a “P.” The ring-post with streamer and ring-post without streamer are also represented as two separate signs in the archaic Uruk script, **MUŠ3** and **LAGAR**<sup>33</sup> respectively. These two signs are found together on some of the archaic texts from Uruk<sup>34</sup> where they function as “separate entries as independent designations.”<sup>35</sup> Both symbols were found with the divine indicator, indicating that they represented deities. Because two signs occurring together logically would not refer to the

<sup>33</sup> Falkenstein 1936: Sign Nos. 201–211; Green and Nissen 1987: Sign No. 323. Although Szarzyńska (1987–88: 11) states that the ring-post without streamer “remain[s] unidentifiable” as a sign in the archaic Uruk script, Green and Nissen (1987: Sign No. 323) identify the sign as **LAGAR**.

<sup>34</sup> As for example on ATU No. 324 (Falkenstein 1936: Taf. 27).

<sup>35</sup> Szarzyńska 1987–88: 3–4.

same deity, these signs, **MUŠ3** and **LAGAR**, must be separate and have separate meanings. K. Szarzyńska<sup>36</sup> suggests that the ring-post without streamer is associated with the god An.<sup>37</sup> However, part of her argument is based on artefacts found at the *Steingebäude* near the Anu Ziggurat, but there is no archaeological evidence that this structure was dedicated to An during the Uruk Period.<sup>38</sup> The association of the ring-post without streamer with the god An is therefore uncertain.

There are much fewer depictions of the ring-post without streamer in the iconographic record than there are of the ring-post with streamer. Like the ring-post with streamer, the ring-post without streamer is represented as surmounting as well as flanking structures. However, unlike the ring-post with streamer, the ring-post without streamer is in both instances associated with reed cattle byres. For example, on a white limestone cylinder seal of unknown provenance now in the Louvre<sup>39</sup> the ring-post without streamer surmounts a cattle byre from which a calf emerges<sup>40</sup> and which is surrounded by eight larger cattle. On a seal impression from the Eanna Precinct<sup>41</sup> two calves emerge from a cattle byre which is flanked by two ring-posts without streamers (**Fig. 2**).

<sup>36</sup> Szarzyńska 1987–88: 11.

<sup>37</sup> Van Buren (1945: 47) also argues that the ring-post without streamer is associated with the god An, but she equates the ring-post without streamer with the *Bügelschaft* (discussed below), and her argument is therefore flawed.

<sup>38</sup> Nöldeke, von Haller, Lenzen and Heinrich 1937: 47; Perkins 1949: 110.

<sup>39</sup> Klq 17. For a photograph of this cylinder seal, see Andrae 1933: Taf. II.a.

<sup>40</sup> By comparison to other similar scenes, a second calf almost certainly emerged from the other side of the cattle byre, but the seal is broken here. See P. P. Delougaz (1968) for more on the motif of young animals emerging from reed structures.

<sup>41</sup> VAT 15374. For a line drawing reconstruction of this seal impression, see Nöldeke 1934: Taf. 25.d.

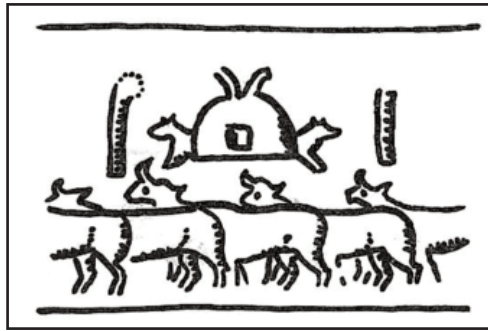


Fig. 2.  
Ring-posts without streamers flanking a building  
(after Heinrich 1957: 13 Abb. 7)

The *Doppelvolute* is a variation of the ring-post without streamer in which two of these standards are depicted back-to-back on top of a structure. This standard is only represented in an architectural context, and it always surmounts a building. A series of seal impressions from the Seal Impression Stratum <sup>42</sup> at Ur originally from one seal depict a building surmounted by a *Doppelvolute* (Fig. 3). The *Doppelvolute* is also represented surmounting architectural models such as a steatite architectural model of unknown origin now in the Vorderasiatisches Museum,<sup>43</sup> where the *Doppelvolute* appears very large in comparison to the structure which forms its base, and is therefore emphasised. By comparison to depictions of buildings in glyptic art, the building represented in this architectural model appears to be a building made of mudbrick. It is unclear whether the building on the series of seal impressions was made of reed or mudbrick. It is therefore uncertain whether the use of the *Doppelvolute* was restricted to one type of building.

<sup>42</sup> The exact dating of the SIS is debated. L. Legrain (1936: 9ff) identifies the seals which made these impressions as dating to the Jemdet Nasr Period. More recent studies such as N. Karg (1984), G. Marchesi and N. Marchetti (2011: 52–54) and R. J. Matthews (1993: 43–44, 46–47) date SIS 4–8 to the Early Dynastic Period. The iconography of the seal which made the impressions under discussion though is more similar to Uruk Period examples than Early Dynastic Period iconography and for this reason is included in this discussion.

<sup>43</sup> VA 10112. For photographs of this architectural model, see Andrae (1933: Taf. III).

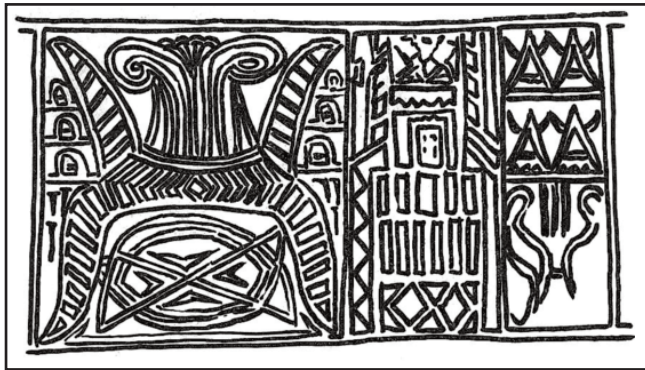


Fig. 3.

A *Doppelvolute* surmounting a building  
(after Legrain 1936: Pl. 20.389).

## THE RINGED POLE

The ringed pole has the appearance of a shaft with pairs of rings, one ring on either side of the shaft.<sup>44</sup> There can be one, two or three pairs of rings; the difference does not appear to have any obvious meaning. In the archaic Uruk script the ringed pole can be identified as the sign **NUN**.<sup>45</sup> **NUN** had a general meaning of “prince, princely, lofty” which was mainly used as an epithet,<sup>46</sup> and P. Steinkeller<sup>47</sup> identifies the sign

<sup>44</sup> The ringed pole is different to the rod with balls which is first depicted on the Victory Stele of Naram-Sin and is known from later examples, such as the limestone fragment of the Gudea stele (AO 4581). For a photograph of this fragment, see Börker-Klähn (1982: Nr. 63), for a line drawing see Suter (2000: 388 ST60). Where the ringed pole has an even number of rings, the rod with balls has an odd number of solid discs, with one surmounting the shaft. The shaft of the shaft of the rod with balls is also often thinner than that of the ringed pole, which is also sometimes tapered. This may be indicative of the ringed pole being formed from a reed bundle, rather than of wood or metal.

<sup>45</sup> Falkenstein 1936: Sign Nos. 236, 249–252; Green and Nissen 1987: Sign No. 421. According to Szarzyńska (1987–88: 10), the use of **NUN** is restricted to the Uruk IV script, the earliest phase of the archaic Uruk script. This restriction though is for the form of the sign in which the rings are represented as circles (Falkenstein 1936: Sign Nos. 249–252), and not for the form of the sign where these are represented as straight lines (Falkenstein 1936: Sign No. 236). Both of these forms though represent the same sign, **NUN** (Green and Nissen 1987: Sign No. 421). Falkenstein 1936: Sign No. 250 most likely had two pairs of rings. That it is represented in the sign list with rings only on one side of the shaft appears to be due to caution in reconstruction.

<sup>46</sup> Szarzyńska 1987–88: 8.

<sup>47</sup> Steinkeller 1998: 88.

as a symbol for the god Enki. O. Keel and S. Schroer<sup>48</sup> alternatively identify the ringed pole as the symbol of the birth goddess Nintu.<sup>49</sup> According to G. Selz<sup>50</sup> Nintu's name "ist etwa mit "Herrin, die gebiert/erschafft" wiederzugeben,"<sup>51</sup> which suits this goddess's birthing function. The logogram **TUR** expressed both "birth" and "hut,"<sup>52</sup> and these two meanings of the logogram have been conflated in Stol's rendering of Nintu's name as "Lady Birth-Hut,"<sup>53</sup> and J. M. Asher-Greve and J. G. Westenholz's rendering of her name as "The Mistress Divine Birth Hut."<sup>54</sup> In this regard, the sign in the archaic Uruk script for **TUR3**<sup>55</sup> looks like a hut surmounted by a type of ringed pole, and may represent a birthing-hut associated with the goddess Nintu. By extension, examples of cattle byres surmounted by ringed poles from the iconographic record may be associated specifically with this goddess. However, in the examples where the ringed pole flanks a building or is symbolic of a building, it is possible that the buildings are associated with the god Enki if this god is associated with the **NUN** logogram.

In the visual repertoire, the ringed pole is depicted surmounting cattle byres on vessels (**Fig. 4**)<sup>56</sup> and on cylinder seals<sup>57</sup> and seal impressions.<sup>58</sup> However, the ringed pole is also depicted as flanking

<sup>48</sup> Keel and Schroer 2002: 109.

<sup>49</sup> Also read as Nintur.

<sup>50</sup> Selz 1995: 266.

<sup>51</sup> "is to be rendered as approximately 'mistress who gives birth/creates.'"

<sup>52</sup> Schroer and Keel 2005: 288.

<sup>53</sup> Stol 2000: 80.

<sup>54</sup> Asher-Greve and Westenholz 2013: 50.

<sup>55</sup> Falkenstein 1936: Sign No. 239; Green and Nissen 1987: Sign No. 563.

<sup>56</sup> For example a limestone fragment now in the Louvre AO 8842. For a photograph of this fragment, see H. R. Hall and L. Woolley (1927: Pl. XXIX.1) and a green stone vessel from the sanctuary of the Small Temple in O43 in Khafajeh. For a photograph and drawing of this vessel, see Frankfort (1936: 69 Fig. 54A-B).

<sup>57</sup> For example a white magnesite cylinder seal surmounted by a silver ram now in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford (Ashmolean 1964:744. For a photograph of this cylinder seal and a line drawing of its impression, see D. Collon (2005: 14 Catalogue No. 12) and an alabaster seal of unknown provenance now in the Pierpont Morgan Collection in New York (Morgan Seal 2). For a photograph of this seal, see Porada (1948: Pl. I.2).

<sup>58</sup> For example a seal impression from the Eanna Precinct at Uruk. For a line drawing of this impression see H. Lenzen (1964: Taf. 26.k).

structures, and, whereas the cattle byres surmounted by the ringed pole are reed structures, the buildings flanked by ringed poles appear to be made of mudbrick. Examples where ringed poles flank buildings include a diorite cylinder seal from Tell Billa now in the Iraq Museum<sup>59</sup> and seal impressions from the Eanna Precinct at Uruk.<sup>60</sup> In addition to surmounting and flanking a building, the ringed pole may also, like the ring-post with streamer on the Warka Vase, function to symbolise sacred architecture, such as on a green marble cylinder seal now housed in the British Museum<sup>61</sup> where the associated objects may be identified as temple inventory. In all examples, the ringed pole is depicted in architectural contexts.



**Fig. 4.**

Ringed poles surmounting a reed cattle byre  
(after Schroer and Keel 2005: 289: Abb. 191).

## THE *BÜGELSCHAFT*

The *Bügelschaft* has the appearance of a shaft with a circle or semicircle attached on one side, and was also clearly associated with architecture. In the archaic Uruk script the *Bügelschaft* is represented by the signs ŠEŠ<sup>62</sup> and URI3.<sup>63</sup> The sign ŠEŠ may represent the moon god Nanna, and the buildings decorated with the *Bügelschaft* in the iconographic record may be associated with this god. However, according to

<sup>59</sup> IM 11953. For a photograph of this seal, see Braun-Holzinger (2007: Taf. 14 FS24).

<sup>60</sup> For line drawing reconstructions of two such impressions, the current locations of which are unknown, see E. Rova (1994: Tav. 44.750 and Tav. 45.751).

<sup>61</sup> BM 12885. For a photograph of this seal, see D. J. Wiseman (1962: Pl. 5.d).

<sup>62</sup> Falkenstein 1936: Sign Nos. 244–246; Green and Nissen 1987: Sign no. 523, 595.

<sup>63</sup> Falkenstein 1936: Sign No. 248.

Steinkeller<sup>64</sup> “the Sumerian word describing emblems was **urin** (**URI3**), a well-documented designated of divine emblems in later periods.” According to Szarzyńska<sup>65</sup> the sign **URI3** means “care” or “protection,” a meaning which originates from the *Bügelschaft*’s function as a door- or gate-post,<sup>66</sup> and it is more likely that this reflects the function or symbolism association with the *Bügelschaft*. The *Bügelschaft* standard in the iconographic record can itself therefore also be seen as symbolic of care and protection. In this way, the *Bügelschaft* marks the building as a sacred space under the “care” or “protection” of a deity.

While the *Bügelschaft* is also clearly associated with architecture, it is not depicted as surmounting a building,<sup>67</sup> but rather as flanking structures, as on a white limestone cylinder seal now in the Iraq Museum<sup>68</sup> or being intrinsically a part of a structure, as on seal impressions from Uruk (**Fig. 5**).<sup>69</sup> On an architectural model from the Anu Ziggurat at Uruk now in the Vorderasiatisches Museum (**Fig. 6**)<sup>70</sup> two *Bügelschafts* flank an opening, or a door, signifying the manner in which the *Bügelschaft* was used in architecture. The only known definite standard extant from the third and fourth millennia BCE is a copper *Bügelschaft* excavated on the brick paving of the Early Dynastic Temple of Ningirsu at Tello/Girsu.<sup>71</sup> Parrot believes that this *Bügelschaft* would have stood at the door of this

<sup>64</sup> Steinkeller 1998: 88.

<sup>65</sup> Szarzyńska 1987–88: 6; 1996: 11.

<sup>66</sup> Szarzyńska 1996: 11 n. 22.

<sup>67</sup> Only one example of the *Bügelschaft* surmounting a building is known, this being a seal impression from SIS 4–5 at Ur from the Early Dynastic Period. See Legrain (1936: Pl. 18.349) for a line drawing reconstruction of this seal impression.

<sup>68</sup> IM 27176. For a photograph of this seal, see Frankfort (1955: Pl. 84.880).

<sup>69</sup> For example excavation number W 21 044,3; W 21 311,4; for a line drawing reconstruction see Rova (1994: Tav. 46.768) and excavation number W 197292; W 19733a; W 19740a; for a line drawing reconstruction see Lenzen (1961: Taf. 25.n).

<sup>70</sup> Excavation number W 16618. For a photograph of this model, see Nöldeke, von Haller, Lenzen and Heinrich (1937: Taf. 48.k). See also Nöldeke, von Haller, Lenzen and Heinrich (1937: 46 Abb. 6) for comparison.

<sup>71</sup> The current location of this standard is unfortunately unknown. E. de Sarzec and L. Heuzey (1884–1912: 410) record that its remains were sent to the Louvre and Constantinople (now Istanbul). For a photograph of this standard, see de Sarzec and Heuzey (1884–1912: Pl. 57.1). For its findspot see de Sarzec and Heuzey (1884–1912: Plan C).



temple, presumably as one of a pair.<sup>72</sup> The archaeological evidence therefore supports the iconographic evidence for the *Bügelschaft* being associated specifically with architecture.

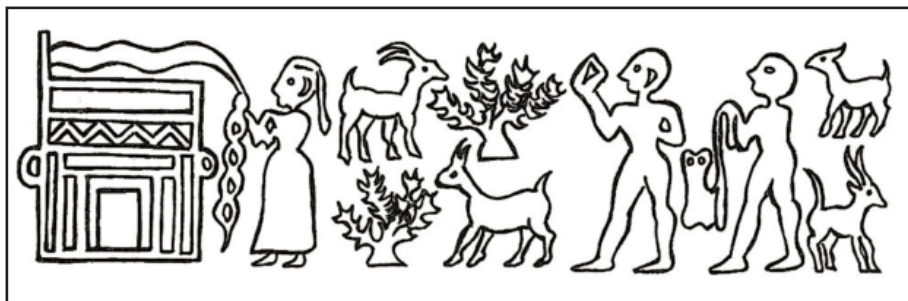


Fig. 5.

Two *Bügelschafts* intrinsically part of a mudbrick structure  
(after Rova 1994: Tav. 46.768).

The association of the *Bügelschaft* with architecture continues into later periods, although by the Akkadian Period (2334-2150 BCE) the standard is predominantly symbolic of architecture, rather than being visually associated with it by either surmounting or flanking a building. Also during the Akkadian Period, the *Bügelschaft* was particularly, but not exclusively, associated with the god Ea.<sup>73</sup> It was also associated with Šamaš,<sup>74</sup> snake gods<sup>75</sup> and a god standing on Mušhuššu.<sup>76</sup> Because the

<sup>72</sup> Parrot 1948: 68, 106.

<sup>73</sup> See for example a black and brown steatite cylinder seal now in the Pierpont Morgan Collection (Morgan Seal 204). For a photograph of this seal, see Porada (1948: Pl. XXI.204) and a light green marble cylinder seal now in the Louvre (MNB 1905). For a photograph of this seal, see R. Boehmer (1965: Taf. XLIV.523) where Ea can be identified by the overflowing vase of water which he holds.

<sup>74</sup> See for example a pink limestone cylinder seal from the Scribal Quarter of Nippur now in the Iraq Museum (IM 56043). For a photograph of this seal see Collon (2005: 166, Catalogue Number 765).

<sup>75</sup> See for example a mottled dark green serpentine seal on unknown provenance now in the Ashmolean Museum (Ashmolean 1949.885). For a photograph of this seal see Buchanan (1966: Pl. 27.344) and a metadiorite cylinder seal now in the Metropolitan Museum (Metropolitan Museum 55.65.5). For a photograph of this seal, see H. Pittman (1987: 23 Fig. 11).

<sup>76</sup> See for example a limestone cylinder seal now in the Vorderasiatisches Museum (VA 3303). For a photograph of this seal see A. Moortgat (1966: Taf. 29.211).

*Bügelschaft* was not associated with only one god, it is unlikely that it was a divine standard of any particular deity. It is more likely that the *Bügelschaft* has the **URI3** sign's meaning of "care" or "protection," and that the buildings associated with the *Bügelschaft* are under the "care" of "protection" of a deity, although who this deity was is not always clear.

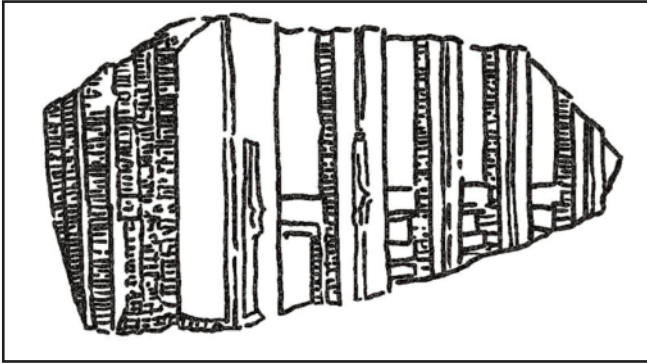


Fig. 6.

An architectural model with two *Bügelschafts* flanking a doorway  
(after Heinrich 1957: 49 Abb. 50).

## THE KNOBBED POLE AND FLORAL/STAR STANDARD

The standards discussed thus far—the ring-post with streamer, ring-post without streamer, ringed pole and *Bügelschaft*—were the major standards of the Uruk Period. The minor standards which are represented in the iconographic record, and which do not appear to be associated with any sign from the archaic Uruk script, are the knobbed pole and the floral or star standard.

The knobbed pole is usually held by figures who appear to be females in a procession. These scenes are restricted to appearances on cylinder seals, as for example on a seal from Jemdet Nasr now in the Iraq Museum<sup>77</sup> and a green serpentine seal of unknown origin now in the Louvre.<sup>78</sup> While these figures may be involved in some type of cultic

<sup>77</sup> IM 2777. For a line drawing of this seal, see R. Matthews (2002: Fig. 7, 6).

<sup>78</sup> AO 6646. For a photograph of this seal, see L. Delaporte (1923: Pl. 69.5).

activity,<sup>79</sup> it is also possible that they are involved in domestic activities associated with pottery or the textile industry,<sup>80</sup> and the knobbed poles would therefore not represent standards. On one seal impression from Jebel Aruda in modern day Northern Syria now in the Aleppo Museum (**Fig. 7**)<sup>81</sup> is what appears to be a structure flanked by two knobbed poles and possibly surmounted by a third. In the Early Dynastic Period (2900-2334 BCE) the knobbed pole is depicted on the relief plaque known as the *Figure aux Plumes*<sup>82</sup> where two of this standard appear to represent the doorway of a sanctuary, perhaps of Ningirsu.<sup>83</sup> The knobbed poles would act like the ring-posts with streamers on the Warka Vase to represent the structure. The knobbed poles on the *Figure aux Plumes* may represent colossal maces,<sup>84</sup> and it is possible that the knobbed poles on the seal impression from Jebel Aruda were also colossal maces marking the doorway of a structure. The knobbed pole was never depicted as an architectural standard in Mesopotamia itself during the Uruk Period.



**Fig. 7.**

Two knobbed poles flanking a structure, with a third surmounting the structure (after Rova 1994: Tav. 3.41).

<sup>79</sup> Moortgat 1966: 88.

<sup>80</sup> Collon 1995: 55.

<sup>81</sup> Excavation Number JA 263. For a line drawing of this impression, see G. van Driel (1983: Nr. 41).

<sup>82</sup> AO 221. For photographs of both sides of this relief plaque, see De Sarzec and Heuzey (1884–1912: Pl. 1bis a-b).

<sup>83</sup> Braun-Holzinger 2007: 18.

<sup>84</sup> De Sarzec and Heuzey 1884–1912: 165; Marchesi and Marchetti 2011: 195.

Similarly, the floral or star standard<sup>85</sup> is only depicted on cylinder seals in scenes with antelope and goats, as for example on a marble cylinder seal in the Yale Babylonian Collection.<sup>86</sup> On a black serpentine cylinder seal now in the Pierpont Morgan Collection<sup>87</sup> these are associated with vertical lines which Ward<sup>88</sup> suggests represent a shrine. Although these lines could represent vegetation rather than a building, if they do represent a shrine, the use of the floral or star standard would be similar to the use of other Uruk Period standards in that it is related to architecture.

### THE DISAPPEARANCE OF URUK PERIOD STANDARDS

Of the major standards of the Uruk Period—the ring-post with streamer, the ring-post without streamer (including *Doppelvolute*), the ringed pole and the *Bügelschaft*—only the *Bügelschaft* is still found in the iconographic record after the Uruk Period. While the other major standards are depicted only in the visual repertoire of the Uruk Period, the *Bügelschaft* is represented throughout the third millennium BCE and into the second millennium BCE. The minor standards, the knobbed pole and floral/star standard, also continue to be depicted into later periods, but their appearance and iconographic context change. The ambiguity in the appearance of the floral/star standard disappears—in later periods the emblem of the standard is clearly a star—while by the Neo-Sumerian Period (2157-2004 BCE) the knobbed pole has a number of variations which appear to be related to weaponry.<sup>89</sup> These standards also come to be held by figures, rather than being in an architectural setting.

<sup>85</sup> The ambiguous appearance—whether stars or flowers are depicted surmounting the shafts—may be intentional. According to R. Labat, the sign for **DINGIR** is represented by both a star and a rosette (Labat 1988: 48–49 Sign No. 13). Goff (1963: 102) also argues that both the star and the flower were fertility symbols as they “place the ideas of the fertility cult in a cosmic setting by blending solar and fertility ideas into one.”

<sup>86</sup> NBC 5989. For a photograph of this seal, see Buchanan (1981: 59, Catalogue Number 169).

<sup>87</sup> Morgan Seal 21. For a photograph of this seal, see Porada 1(948: Pl. IV.21).

<sup>88</sup> Ward 1910: 181.

<sup>89</sup> See for example a seal impression from Girsu/Tell (BM 13079A). For a line drawing reconstruction of this impression see Fischer (1997: 179 Nr.46) and a dolomite cylinder seal possibly from Uruk (BM 116719). For a photograph see Collon (2005: 168, Catalogue Number 781).

Black and Green suggest that the reason the ring-post with streamer stops being depicted in the visual repertoire<sup>90</sup> is “due to the obsolescence of pictographic writing.” In art, the deities with whom the Uruk period standards were associated came to have other symbols associated with them or representing them after the Uruk Period. For example, Inanna, who was associated with the **MUŠ3** sign in the archaic Uruk script and the ring-post with streamer in Uruk Period iconography, came to be associated with the eight-pointed star and disc,<sup>91</sup> and with the lion during later periods. However, the development of the cuneiform script into more abstract signs does not entirely explain the disappearance of the standards from the iconographic record, because the *Bügelschaft*, associated with the **ŠEŠ** and **URI3** signs in the archaic Uruk script, continued to be represented in the visual repertoire instead, a larger factor may be the materials used in the manufacture of the different types of standards, and the architecture with which they were associated. The ring-posts with streamers, the ring-post without streamers and the ringed pole were made of reed. This is made clear on objects such as the baked clay inlays representing ring-posts with streamers<sup>92</sup> where the places where the reed bundles were tied are clearly visible by the horizontal lines.<sup>93</sup> The association of these standards with reed architecture may also point to the standards being made of reed. The reeds which were used in reed architecture grow as tall at 4,5 metres,<sup>94</sup> which makes the stems ideal for use as the shafts of stan-

<sup>90</sup> Black and Green 1992: 154. According to Black and Green (1992:154), the ring-post with streamer continues to be depicted, although rarely, into the Early Dynastic Period. I am unaware of any depictions after the Uruk Period.

<sup>91</sup> In this regard, according to B. Landsberger (1961: 17 n.64), a standard on the Gudea Stelae with the emblem of a lion with a disc on its back (Börker-Klähn 1982: Nr. 70) may represent Inanna's **ašme** standard mentioned in *Gudea Cylinder A* xiv:27 (D.O. Edzard 1997:78 RIME E3/1.1.7.CylA). The ring-post with streamer as the standard of Inanna in the Uruk period is then replaced by her **ašme** standard by the Neo-Sumerian Period.

<sup>92</sup> For example an inlay now in the Vorderasiatisches Museum (VA 14539) and another now in the Iraq Museum (excavation number W 5591), both of which were excavated at Uruk. For a photograph of the first inlay, see J. Jordan (1930: Taf. 19.c), and for a photograph of the second inlay, see Jordan (1931: 34 Abb. 23).

<sup>93</sup> Marchesi and Marchetti 2011: 190 n. 19.

<sup>94</sup> Moorey 1994: 361.

dards. However, as Delougaz<sup>95</sup> states, the cattle byres and similar buildings are “of a non-permanent character, that is, it is in the nature of a hut or an inclosure built of reeds, matting, wattle, etc.” The non-permanent or semi-permanent nature of such buildings may indicate a non-permanent nature of the associated standards. By the succeeding Early Dynastic Period, cattle byres and similar reed buildings associated with standards are rare in the iconographic record. Some may be depicted on seal impressions from the Seal Impression Strata at Ur, but when these buildings are associated with a standard, it is a *Bügeltschaft*.<sup>96</sup> While this cannot account for the complete loss of the standards, as the standards were also associated with mudbrick architecture in the Uruk Period, it seems reasonable that it is a factor in their disappearance from the iconographic record. As the mudbrick buildings were of a more permanent nature, the accompanying standards would also have been made of more durable materials such as wood or copper, as was the case for the *Bügeltschaft* from the Ningirsu Temple at Tello/Girsu. In this way, the *Bügeltschaft*, which was the only major architectural standard of the Uruk Period which was not a reed standard, continued to be in use into later periods.

## CONCLUSIONS

Standards are represented in the late Uruk/Jemdet Nasr Period on a variety of types of artefacts—in relief sculpture on glyptic art, vessels, and a trough, and in sculpture in the round in architectural models. In all of these, the standards are associated with architecture. Both the *Bügeltschaft* and *Doppelvolute* are represented as parts of architectural models, and a *Bügeltschaft* from the Ningirsu Temple at Tello/Girsu is the only known surviving standard from the third and fourth millennia BCE Mesopotamia. Further compelling evidence for the architectural origin of standards can be found in the lack of evidence for standards

<sup>95</sup> Delougaz 1968: 184.

<sup>96</sup> See for example Legrain 1936: Pl. 3.45, Pl. 17.337, Pl. 17.339, Pl. 17.340, Pl. 17.341, Pl. 17.342.

being found in other contexts. There are no royal standards, battle standards, city standards or standards in judicial procedures depicted in Uruk Period iconography. Some of the standards may be described as being in a ritual context, but it is specifically through their association with architecture, and that building's association with some ritual activity, that these standards have some ritual context. The standards themselves are therefore not in a ritual context, they are associated with buildings where ritual activity is occurring.

Standards could surmount buildings, flank buildings, or be symbolic of buildings. When surmounting a structure, these buildings are always animal byres, usually with two young animals emerging from the buildings, one on either side. When the standards flank the structure, these buildings may be associated with animals, or more frequently they may be associated with human activity which appears to be ritual, and these buildings are most likely temples or shrines. When a standard represents or is symbolic of a building, it appears that these are temples or shrines due to the iconographic context—the human, often ritual, activity or the temple inventory which are associated with the standard. The standards were also associated with different types of architecture. The reed structures with which standards were associated are always animal byres. The buildings which appear to be of mudbrick can be associated with animals which stand outside the structure, but are more commonly associated with human activity and appear to be sacred structures—temples or shrines.

The ring-post with streamer, the ring-post without streamer, the ringed pole and the *Bügelschaft* were associated with signs in the archaic Uruk script, **MUŠ3**, **LAGAR**, **NUN**, and **ŠEŠ** and **URI3** respectively. The ringed pole when surmounting a building is also related to the sign **TUR3**. These signs, in turn, when accompanied by the divine indicator represented the names of deities. **MUŠ3** represented the goddess Inanna, **LAGAR** may have represented the god An (although this is uncertain), **NUN** the god Enki or goddess Nintu, and the sign **TUR3** specifically with Nintu, and **ŠEŠ** may have been associated with the god Nanna, and **URI3** symbolised “care” or “protection.” As such, in

the iconographic record, the buildings associated with the standards related to these signs may also be related to the deities who were represented by the signs. In this manner, the buildings associated with the ring-post with streamer may be buildings associated specifically with Inanna, and the cattle byres surmounted by the ringed pole may be specifically associated with the goddess Nintu through her association with the **TUR3** sign. The buildings associated with the ring-post without streamer, the ringed pole and the *Bügelschaft* may be associated with the gods An, Enki and Nintu, and Nanna respectively, although these designations are less certain. At least in the case of the *Bügelschaft*, an interpretation of the “care” and “protection” meanings of the **URI3** sign, and the buildings associated with the *Bügelschaft* being under the “care” or “protection” of a deity, whoever that deity may be, appear to be more likely when taking the evidence from later periods into account. In any case, because of the association of the related signs in the archaic Uruk script with deities, the structures associated with the standards in the iconographic record can be interpreted as sacred buildings. The mudbrick structures can be described as temples or shrines, while the animal byres can be understood as belonging to the particular deity associated with the associated standard.

Through the signs in the archaic Uruk script, the Uruk period standards appear to be related to deities and therefore could be classified divine standards. However, they are found specifically in architectural contexts, and this aspect cannot be overlooked. Although being associated with deities, the primary function was that of an architectural standard. The iconographic evidence therefore reveals that standards had their origins as architectural standards during the Uruk Period.

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