

Title: Amulets? On the possible function of zoomorphic pendants from child burials in Tell Rad Shaqrah (Syria)

Author(s): Dariusz Szelaąg

Journal: *Polish Archaeology in the Mediterranean* 23/2, *Special Studies: Beyond ornamentation. Jewelry as an Aspect of Material Culture in the Ancient Near East*, edited by A. Golani, Z. Wygnańska

Year: 2014

Pages: 145-160

ISSN 1234-5415 (Print), ISSN 2083-537X (Online)

Publisher: Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology, University of Warsaw (PCMA UW),
Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego (WUW)

www.pcma.uw.edu.pl - www.wuw.pl

Abstract: Among the grave goods accompanying child burials discovered at the site of Tell Rad Shaqrah there is a distinctive group of zoomorphic pendants. Pendants made of shell or nacre, similar both in form and decoration (circle-and-dot motif), are the most comprehensive part of it. These animal pendants have parallels from sites mainly in northern Syria and Mesopotamia. The zoomorphic pendants from Tell Rad Shaqrah could have been used as personal adornments, but their potential magical significance can also be considered.

Keywords: Tell Rad Shaqrah, burials, shell/nacre, zoomorphic pendants, personal adornment

AMULETS?

ON THE POSSIBLE FUNCTION OF ZOOMORPHIC PENDANTS FROM CHILD BURIALS IN TELL RAD SHAQRAH (SYRIA)

Dariusz Szelaġ

Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw

Abstract: Among the grave goods accompanying child burials discovered at the site of Tell Rad Shaqrah there is a distinctive group of zoomorphic pendants. Pendants made of shell or nacre, similar both in form and decoration (circle-and-dot motif), are the most comprehensive part of it. These animal pendants have parallels from sites mainly in northern Syria and Mesopotamia. The zoomorphic pendants from Tell Rad Shaqrah could have been used as personal adornments, but their potential magical significance can also be considered.

Keywords: Tell Rad Shaqrah, burials, shell/nacre, zoomorphic pendants, personal adornment

Zoomorphic pendants were part of child grave inventories from Tell Rad Shaqrah in northeastern Syria, a small mound (140 x 120 m) situated 15 km to the southeast of modern Hassake, on the eastern edge of the Khabur river valley. The site was discovered during salvage excavations carried out in 1991–1995 by a team from the Polish Centre of Mediterranean Archaeology of the University of Warsaw (for preliminary reports, see Bieliński 1992; 1993; 1994; 1995; 1996; see also Koliński 1996). The site was occupied mainly from the mid-3rd millennium BC (Early Jezirah IIIa) (Bieliński 1992: 82; 1994: 159; Koliński 1996: 69) to the EJ IV

period (about 2350–2200 BC) (Bieliński 1996: 162, 168, 170; Koliński 1996: 67).

The assemblage of zoomorphic pendants discussed in the present article came from five graves and in each case it constituted part of a richer grave inventory (for a detailed list of grave inventories, see Appendix below). The pendants were distinguished not only by their form, representing three different kinds of animal creatures, but partly also by their decoration in the form of a circle-and-dot motif. The preferred material for making these personal adornments was shell and nacre, but stone and frit were also used. The shell and nacre pendants constitute

the main focus of this article, but they will be considered in the broader context of similar pieces made of other materials

as they are all assumed to hold the same symbolic, potentially magical significance that extends beyond simple ornamentation.

ZOOMORPHIC PENDANTS

Ten of the animal pendants found in child graves in Tell Rad Shaqrah were made of shell or nacre. There were also examples made of stone (four items) and frit (three items). The shell pendants were small, less than 4 cm by 1.6–2.4 cm and rather thin, approximately 0.1–0.3 cm. The shells were not identified by a specialist, but they appear to have been a marine species. Those made of other materials were also small, measuring 1.8–3.3 cm by 1.5–2.6 cm (for details, see Appendix below).

Three different kinds of creatures represented by these pendants included quadrupeds/mammals, birds and fish.¹ Quadrupeds were indeed the largest group and while the description has to be broad because of the difficulties in identifying individual species (see Szeląg 2013: 599–603), it is to be assumed that bulls, cows, sheep and rams were depicted. Quadrupeds from Graves 16 and 20 may depict a ram [Figs 1, 3], one pendant from Grave 17 a cow and the pendant from Grave 21 a bull [Fig. 4]. The pendant from Grave 9, made of shell [Fig. 2, top left], resembles another pendant coming from the same grave, but made of stone [Fig. 2, top right]. They form a distinctive group, having both eyes depicted frontally, similarly as on pendants from Tell Bi'a (Strommenger, Kohlmeyer 2000: 45, 47, Pls. 53:2, 65:8, pendant in shape of a lion, dated to the

EJ IV period, perforated vertically) and Tell Selenkahiye (van Loon 2001: 155, Fig. 4A.8A:21, horizontally perforated, described as a "*couchant*" lion). Similar examples come from Tell Knedij (Martin, Wartke 2005: 250, Pl. 172:504, bull?), Tell Abu Hgaira (Martin, Wartke 1993–1994: Fig. 14: upper register, first from left), Tell Atij (Fortin 1990: 240, Fig. 21, bull) and Tell Qara Quzaq (Akkermans, Schwartz 2003: 274, Fig. 8.24, bull). The presumed rams from Graves 16 and 20 find close parallels at Tell Chuera (Moortgat, Moortgat-Correns 1976: 62, Fig. 24A, mother-of-pearl, identified by the excavators as a hen) and Mari (Parrot 1935: 127, Fig. 10, probably shell). Three stone quadrupeds with vertical perforation came from Graves 19 and 20 [Fig. 3] (see Szeląg 2002: 212–213, Fig. 1:8, 11, 12).

The quadruped pendants were all decorated with shallow circle-and-dot incisions and/or deeper circular incisions. These were probably intended to be filled with pigment, perhaps even inlays of a different material in the case of the deeper incisions. The hollows in the assemblage from Rad Shaqrah would have been colored with pigment. The circle-and-dot motif was very common in the second half of the 3rd millennium BC, being used to decorate a variety of items, from stone vessels and containers, beads,

¹ The inventory of Grave 17 included six frogs made of frit, but since they were not perforated, they can not be described as pendants (see Szeląg 2002: 213, Fig. 1:7).

spindle whorls and rings. The find context of some of these articles, that is, graves and temple foundation deposits, could indicate the symbolic value of this motif (for details, see Szeląg 2013: 601–603).

The three pendants shaped as birds are characterized by spread wings their heads are unfortunately missing, (see Szeląg 2013: 603–605) [Figs 1, 3]. This form of pendant was very common and was found at numerous sites in Mesopotamia and Elam. Examples were described from Tell el-Raqa'i (Dunham 1993: 247–251, Fig. 6, burial 29/132–12, Lot B-44; Fig. 12, burial 29/132–21, Lot B-45). The author cites parallels from other sites: Mari, Tell Atij, Kish, and Tell Tawi for the shell pendants, Fara for the stone pendants and Susa and Abu Salabikh for the ones of lapislazuli (see Dunham 1993: 247, note 49, with further references). Other parallels are



Fig. 1. Pendants from Grave 16
(All photos A. Reiche)



Fig. 2. Pendants and beads from Grave 9

known from northern Mesopotamia: Tell Bi'a (Strommenger, Kohlmeyer [eds] 1998: Pl. 125: 12, mother-of-pearl), Habuba Kabira (Strommenger 1979: Fig. 22, shell), Selenkahiye (van Loon 2001: 155, Fig. 4A.8A:25, shell), Tell Chuera (Orthmann, Hempelmann, Kuhne 1995: 40, 43, Fig. 22:61a, shell), Tell Abu Hġaira (Martin, Wartke 1993–1994: 210, Fig. 14,

shell?; Suleiman, Quenet 2012: 16, 38, Fig. 16, shell), Tell Abu Hafur (Koliński, Ławecka 1992: 202, Pl. 24:12a, shell), Tell Arbid (Bieliński 2010: 542–543, Fig. 6, shell). From southern Mesopotamia there is the parallel from Ur (Woolley 1955: 187, Pl. 28, U. 17860).

Birds, but presented in profile (ducks?), were represented by a set of four pendants



Fig. 3. Zoomorphic pendants from Grave 20; pictured at the bottom, complete set of personal adornments from the burial (zoomorphic pendants in the box)

from Grave 21, made of frit and perforated horizontally [Fig. 4, box]. Similar examples come from Tell Bi'a, Mari and Tell Brak (see Szeląg 2002: 214, Fig.1:16).

The one fish-shaped pendant (see Szeląg 2013: 605–606) is very simplified in form, having only one eye (a hole that was used for threading the piece) and the tail marked [see Fig. 1]. In northern

Mesopotamia, parallels were found in Tell Abu Hġaira (Martin, Wartke 1993–1994: 210, Fig. 14), Mari (Parrot 1956: 160, Pl. LX:201, 271, 370) Tell Chuera (Moortgat, Moortgat-Correns 1976: 62, Fig. 24b, “Einlage-Plättchen”) and Tell al-Raqa'i, although in all these instances both eyes were marked and there was an incised pattern that presumably indicated scales. An interesting variant in the shape of two fish hanging by their mouths came from graves at Tell al-Raqa'i (Dunham 1993: Fig. 1, burial 42/96–35, Lot B-75b), paralleled by finds from Uruk (Limper 1988: 31, Fig. 25 and citing further examples from Khafajeh, Tello and Ur). Fish pendants were also rendered in other materials, such as two examples from Raqa'i (Curvers, Schwartz 1990: 13, Fig. 14, Grave 48/90, limestone; Dunham 1993: Fig. 4, Grave 29/132-12, bone pendant).



Fig. 4. Bull-shaped pendant from Grave 21; pictured at the bottom, complete set of personal adornments, including metal artifacts; box, four duck(?)–shaped pendants

The context of the finds is not explicit regarding how these pendants were worn. In the case of two of the grave inventories from Rad Shaqrah, beads and pendants formed separate groups (see Szeląg 2002: 206), and there are analogies from other sites showing that beads and pendants were parts of necklaces or bracelets (Musche 1992: 75, Fig. 1 [Ur], 90, Fig. 8

[Tell Asmar]; Dunham 1993: 239). These ornaments could have also been part of inlay compositions (Moortgat, Moortgat-Correns 1976: 61–62) or sewn on garments (Dunham 1993: 240; Orthmann, Hempelmann, Kuhne 1995: 40, 43). The ones of stone with vertical perforations could have been mounted on top of pins (Moortgat-Correns 1988: 68–69, Fig. 8).

CONTEXT

The grave context, encompassing at Tell Rad Shaqrah only child burials of a certain kind, is believed to be of significance, justifying the following brief analysis of the grave assemblage from the site.

Excavations revealed altogether 41 graves from the period in question, of which 33 constituted the basis for the following discussion (eight had to be disregarded owing to the state of destruction that excluded any identification of grave type and age of deceased). Four general categories of graves were identified:

1) Simple pit graves containing adult burials, five in all (Bieliński 1992: 80–81) and one mud-brick box (described as a child burial in Ławecka 1998: 83; assigned to the adult group following anthropological examination of the bones, see Sołtysiak 2006: 141). The grave inventories in these cases included between one to six pottery vessels, toggle pins of copper alloy and occasionally a small number (two to

eight) of simple beads made of different raw materials, such as stone (limestone, carnelian), and also frit.

2) Pot burials of the newborn.² Eight burials of this type were located in small pits inside rooms of houses, immediately under the floors, usually placed in the corners (Bieliński 1996: 167). The ceramic vessels were cooking pots, which were set upright in the grave pits. These burials were generally not accompanied by any grave goods, the sole exception being a small bone ring found in one of them.

3) Mud-brick boxes or cists containing child burials, 16 in all. These graves were constructed of mud bricks set on edge to form a box, occasionally furnished with a mud-brick floor and a covering of mud bricks set on edge or arranged obliquely. In one case, a stone slab was used as a covering (Bieliński 1992: 83; 1994: 160–162; 1995: 112; 1996: 167–168; Ławecka 1998: 83, Figs 3, 4:1, 4, 5–6, photo 4). A mud-brick cist

² Generally on child pot burials from Mesopotamia, see Kulemann-Ossen, Novák 2000, with further literature and Valentini 2011: 268–269, 270; see also Munčev, Merpert, Amirov 2004: 344 (pot burials from Tell Chazna); Martin 2005: 50–51 (Tell Knedij); Hockmann 2010: 40–42 (Ashur). A similar burial custom was also observed in the Levant, see for example, Ilan 1995: 126–127, 129–132; 2002: 94; Joffe 2003: 48, 53; Golani, Nagar 2011: 86–90. I am grateful to Amir Golani for bringing these references to my attention.

grave with a covering of stone slabs was recorded at Tell Melebiya (Tomb 2232, EJ II/IIIa, Lebeau 1993: 231).

- 4) Stone cists containing child burials. The three examples discovered at Rad Shaqrah were constructed of stones, and each covered with single limestone slab (Bieliński 1992: 85 and Fig. 3; 1995: 115; 1996: 167) and were certainly the most elaborate grave structures on site with no known parallels anywhere in the Khabur region. One grave of the kind from the EJ IIIB was recorded at Tell Chuera, a site to the west of the Khabur valley (Valentini 2011: 268).

Child graves from Rad Shaqrah usually contained the remains of one individual; in only two cases were two individuals buried together. Age at death of the children (ascertained in the case of nine of the 19 excavated burials) ranged from nine months to six years (Sołtysiak 2006). All the child graves were intramural and associated with architectural strata, but the level from which they were dug is often uncertain. It has been suggested that situating child graves within settlements (as opposed to the presumed extramural cemeteries of adults) was a local custom in the Khabur region (Akkermans, Schwartz 2003: 270).³ However, contemporary adult graves uncovered at Rad Shaqrah have undermined this idea (on *intra* and *extra muros* burials in the Khabur region in the 3rd millennium BC, see Valentini 2011: 270–272).

Child grave inventories, regardless of whether from the mud-brick cists or the

variant stone cists, were accompanied by one to eight ceramic vessels and various types of jewelry [see *Figs 3, 4*]. These included beads and pendants made of a variety of raw materials, such as different kinds of stone, shell, frit and lead. Moreover, there were diverse bronze articles, such as earrings, bracelets and one example of a toggle pin (Szeląg 2002: 206). The zoomorphic pendants made of shell or nacre were found in three mud-brick cists and two stone cists (for detailed grave inventories, see Appendix; see also Szeląg 2013: 599–606).⁴

The number and types of grave goods permit conclusions regarding the status of different age groups in society. The Rad Shaqrah graves were evidently differentiated in terms of grave inventories and the differences were clearly age-related. Infants under one year were almost without exception buried without grave goods, while the older children were furnished usually with some articles and occasionally even with a rich set. Adults were given toggle pins and only a small number of beads. Similar patterns were recorded at other sites in the region, e.g., Raqa'i and Abu Hġaira (see below). Thus, it appears that the newborns had the "status of the subordinate dimension" (see Ilan 1995: 133; Hockmann 2010: 6–7; see also Valentini 2011: 270, note 46), whereas the older children and adults were accorded higher status. An important observation, however, is that at Rad Shaqrah animal pendants and larger numbers of beads were found only in the graves of the older children.

³ Similar suggestions have been raised for burial customs at Tell Abu Hġaira (Martin, Wartke 1993–1994: 208), where graves of adults, older children and adolescents were located outside of the site.

⁴ One pendant was found outside of a grave context, see Szeląg 2013: 601, Fig. 1:11.

Child graves at other sites from the second half of the 3rd millennium BC in the Khabur valley were also strongly associated with finds of animal pendants in the inventories. At Tell Knedij a single mud-brick cist grave of a child (9–18 months) contained, among others, a vertically perforated pendant made of stone in the form of a bird. Two pot burials of newborns dated to the EJ III a/b did not yield any grave goods (Martin 2005: 50–51). At Tell Abu Hafur, Polish excavations uncovered seven interments: three pot burials of newborns or infants without any grave goods, one adult pit burial containing pottery and two bone pins, and three mud-brick cists holding child burials, in two cases devoid of accompanying finds and in the third (a child of 5–6 years), furnished with pottery vessels, various beads and shell animal pendants that formed a necklace (EJ IIIa, Koliński, Ławecka 1992: 202, Pl. 24:12a, b, c). The pendants were described as made of bone, but the excavators also mentioned “three mollusc-shell plaquettes”, of which only one was evidently of a bird with spread wings (Koliński, Ławecka 1992: 211 and Pl. 24:12a); the condition of the others was too fragmentary to enable clear identification. A similar pendant in the shape of a bird with spread wings came from the Polish excavations at Tell Arbid; it was found among other grave goods

including pottery vessels, a bronze bracelet, beads of lapislazuli, carnelian and shell, in a child grave dated to the EJ IV period (Bieliński 2010: 542–543, Fig. 6). Child burials reported from Abu Hġaira included seven newborn/infant pot burials (see Kulemann-Ossen, Novák 2000: 122) and nine child interments in mud-brick cists. Stone (quadruped) and shell (mostly fish and bird) pendants were found in some of the latter graves, for example, four bird pendants with spread wings, two fish pendants, two quadruped pendants, one crescent pendant and other pendants and beads in a single grave (EJ IIIa–b, Martin, Wartke 1993–1994: 208–211, Figs 14–15). Finally, there is the rich assemblage of 16 child burials from Level 2 at Raqa’i, a small village site located 3 km to the south of Tell Rad Shaqrah. The age of the children ranged from newborn to six years; one grave was a pot burial, three were pit burials and 12 represented mud-brick cist graves. Five of the latter kind of grave were furnished with a relative wealth of articles: six to ten vessels, hundreds of beads, metal objects and several pendants (altogether 1307 beads and pendants and 39 vessels out of the total for these graves amounting to 1385 beads and pendants and 63 ceramic vessels, see Schwartz, Curvers 1993/94: 254–255; see also Dunham 1993). The remaining graves were much poorer in content, including only a few ceramic vessels and some beads.

ANIMAL PENDANT SYMBOLISM POSSIBLE INTERPRETATIONS

Personal adornment is a natural function of pendants and beads, which could also have served both as status markers and as protective amulets against evil (Dunham

1993: 237). Magical properties of different kinds of stones and shells, as well as rituals making use of amulets to protect against different demons are attested in

Mesopotamian texts from the 1st millennium BC (Dunham 1993: 240–241; see also Gensheimer 1984: 67; Moorey 1994: 129). Shells and items made of shells in graves or temples, found in Ashur (see von den Driesch 1995: 353–354), Mari (Beyer, Jean-Marie 2007), Nineveh (Gut, Reade, Boehmer 2001), Tell Bi'a (Miglus, Strommenger 2002: Pls 129–131) and other sites, could have also served this particular purpose (Gensheimer 1984: 67). At Rad Shaqrah, animal pendants were found almost exclusively in graves, but there were two examples, one of shell (Szeląg 2013: 601, Cat. 31) and the other of stone (Bieliński 1994: 160,⁵ Fig. 3, first from left) from occupation levels. These finds, as well as examples from temples, for instance, clearly demonstrate that the (sepulchral) function of pendants in funeral rites or as part of grave inventories was not their only purpose.

A possible apotropaic function for such pendants has been suggested based on the presence of beads and pendants in graves at Raqa'i and relevant passages in Mesopotamian magical and medical texts from the 1st millennium BC (Dunham 1993: 240–241; see also Gensheimer 1984: 67; Moorey 1994: 129). The texts also referred to the danger posed by demons, for example, the lion-headed female demon Lamashtu, who attacked pregnant women, babies and children in particular. Images of dogs, snakes and items, such as boats and shoes, were often invoked in the rituals against Lamashtu. Beads and pendants of comparable shape were found in the Raqa'i child graves; they may have been worn by children as protection and were subsequently deposited with

them in their graves (Dunham 1993: 237–257). The finds from Raqa'i could be the best comparison for the pendants from Rad Shaqrah, which was more or less contemporary and located nearby.

It can be assumed that if pendants were necessary in magical rituals, they should be common among the grave goods. This is not necessarily the case in Rad Shaqrah and Raqa'i; indeed at Rad Shaqrah, pendants are even less numerous in graves than at Raqa'i. In addition, had pendants been used in funerary rituals, similar sets of pendants could be expected in different graves at both Raqa'i and Rad Shaqrah. There is no evidence of such hypothetical sets, however, among the grave goods from Rad Shaqrah. The graves there contained from one pendant (Graves 9, 17 and 18) to four (Grave 21), thus there is no set and accepted number per burial. In the case of one of the multiple burials (Grave 20, see Bieliński 1995: 115), the two skeletons of children were accompanied by two shell bird pendants, two shell quadruped pendants and two stone quadruped pendants, suggesting that a hypothetical set could have consisted of one shell bird, one shell animal and one other animal carved in stone. Another burial (Grave 16) contained pendants in the form of a bird and a quadruped, but instead of another quadruped, there was a fish pendant. The absence of bird pendants from some burials indicates that bird pendants need not have been part of the hypothetical set. Moreover, the Raqa'i material reveals little evidence of sets: five shapes, i.e., anthropomorphic figure, vessel, bird in profile, dog, snake, were attested only once, and five other forms, i.e., bird with

⁵ This stone pendant, depicting a frog, was incorrectly described as coming from a grave.

spread wings, "boat" with animal head ends, "foot" or "shoe", quadruped, and fish, were attested twice. It should be kept in mind that the category of quadrupeds is very broad and that the fish pendants from both graves differed in shape (see Dunham 1993: Table II on page 257).

Another observation is that pendants in the form of a vessel, dog, snake or foot that are present at Raqa'i are absent from Rad Shaqrah. At Raqa'i, on the other hand, there are no lion, or duck pendants, which are known from Rad Shaqrah. The demons attacking children at Raqa'i and Rad Shaqrah, as well as at other sites, appear to have been of a very different nature, considering that different pendants or sets of pendants were needed to protect against them.

On the other hand, if the magical apotropaic powers were associated with shape as well as raw material, then each kind of animal would have been made of a different material. But the evidence indicates that material was of rather secondary importance, because pendants from a single grave could be of stone and shell or of shell and frit, or of lead, shell and frit and the same type of pendant form could also be rendered in different materials.

Finally, Mesopotamian sources speaking of Lamashtu leave no doubt that the demon brought illness to pregnant women, babies and small children (see Faber 1983: especially 440–441). It would be expected that pendants would have accompanied burials of all these age and sex categories, but they were found actually only in child graves. The newborn were largely deprived of grave goods, while the graves of adults had only toggle pins and beads.

In an alternative interpretation, the beads and pendants were regarded as a manifestation of rituals performed — unsuccessfully — to cure a child of illness. After the child's death, they were deposited in the grave. The absence of such amulets was interpreted as evidence of a child's sudden death, before any healing rituals could be performed (Schwartz, Curvers 1993–1994: 255). According to this hypothesis, all burials of newborns in cooking pots, without grave goods, should be interpreted as cases of sudden death. More importantly, amulets/pendants deposited in child graves, if they really bear witness to unsuccessful healing rituals, should be regarded as markers of failure. If the amulets did not fulfill their role in this life, how could they be needed in the afterlife? Moreover, items deposited in graves should (or were intended to) last forever, hence such a manifestation of failure "for eternity" is not very convincing.

To sum up, beads and pendants should not be regarded solely as items used in rituals performed to cure sick children. They were used rather as a means of general protection against different types of danger (illness, evil demons, angry gods) (Dunham 1993: 237) and could fulfill their role also in the afterlife. It is noteworthy, that animal pendants found in Tell Rad Shaqrah (and Tell el-Raqa'i) were deposited in graves together with other grave goods, for example ceramic vessels, which could contain food and water or milk. The presence of grave goods in burials should be connected with beliefs in the afterlife, beliefs concerning the fate of the children after their death. Danger would have lurked presumably also after death. Thus, animal (and other) pendants could

be regarded as protective amulets also for the netherworld.

But if this interpretation is accepted, one is left to wonder why such protective amulets are missing from adult burials. It is possible, of course, that adult individuals were protected by means that leave no archaeological evidence, perhaps amulets made of organic materials or motifs embroidered on robes or shrouds or body ornamentation in the form of tattoos or painted symbols. Moreover, adults could have been protected by word and gesture, such as appropriate magical spells or signs warding off evil. This could have differentiated adults from children, as adults have the capability of recognizing evil and reacting with appropriate behavior (action, word or gesture). Children unable to do so would have had to have amulets for protection. Since the critical age for child comes when it starts to toddle, leaving the home and exploring the world with greater independence, it is then that it needs to be protected (indeed, even today parents tend to set up all kinds of protective barriers to counter possible threats). At the infant stage, the child was kept safe in the protection of its mother and in the house, which was additionally protected by magical spells (Touret 2010: 254–262). It cannot be by chance that infant burials in pots were devoid of any grave inventories and were made inside houses, unlike the burials of older children. Both the form of burial and its location confirms the close ties of the infant with the house and indirectly with the mother.

Commenting on the large number of child burials in level 2 at Tell el-Raqa'i, the excavators Glenn H. Schwartz and Hans H. Curvers pointed to other threats associated with the transition from

breastfeeding, when immunity is assured by the mother's milk, to independent feeding, before a child develops a natural immunity of its own. This is usually between the second and sixth year of age (Schwartz, Curvers 1993–1994: 254–255). This suggestion is not in opposition to what was said above. Illness due to lack of natural immunity could have been yet another of the dangers that the child had to be protected against and zoomorphic amulets could have provided such protection.

The last issue is the choice of the animal form for shell pendants. Why animals, and why so many different kinds? One can try to connect the representation of different animals depicted in the form of small beads and pendants with particular demons, mythological creatures or gods (Anzu, Lamashtu, Enlil, Gula, Ningirima), using later texts and/or iconography (Dunham 1993: 242–251). The main difficulty lies in the fact that not all the animals find references in textual sources. If a bird with spread wings is considered as representing Anzu as a symbol of Ningirsu or Enlil (Dunham 1993: 242–251), then pendants in the form of a fish or bull should also represent mythological creatures that are as yet unknown.

Pendants should be considered in my opinion rather as a representation of nature in its totality. Any question as to the number of different forms and the actual choice of shapes deposited in a single grave would therefore be of secondary importance, because even one of them could be regarded as *pars pro toto* and could stand for all living creatures, serving as protection for the child in this life and in the netherworld.

APPENDIX

The following lists child graves from Tell Rad Shaqrah containing animal shell pendants. The form of the grave and the remaining grave inventory are described for the sake of context:

Grave 9 (mud-brick box) [*Fig. 2*]

Pendant of nacre, depicting a quadruped, horizontally perforated, with eyes as concentric circles, dotted in the middle, circle-and-dot engraving on the body, 3.8 x 1.7 cm, Th. approximately 0.2 cm.

Pendant of stone (limestone?), depicting a quadruped (lion), horizontal perforation, eyes as concentric circles, dotted in the middle, circle-and-dot engraving on the body, 3.3 x 2.6 x 0.7 cm.

Other grave goods: three ceramic vessels, pendant of frit, and 14 beads made of stone.

Grave 16 (mud-brick box) [*Fig. 1*]

Pendant of nacre, depicting a quadruped, horizontally perforated, with the eye as a concentric incision, circle-and-dot engravings on the body, max. 1.5 x 2.2 cm, Th. 0.2 cm.

Pendant of nacre, depicting fragmentary bird with spread wings, horizontally perforated, feathers indicated as incised lines, max. 1.1 x 1.8 cm, Th. approx. 0.2 cm.

Pendant of nacre, depicting a fish, horizontally perforated (the hole represents the fish's eye), max. 3.0 x 1.2 cm, Th. 0.2 cm.

Other grave goods: four ceramic vessels, 149 beads made of stone, frit, whitish friable material (paste?) and nacre, one copper/bronze fragment.

Grave 17 (mud-brick box covered with a stone slab; not illustrated)

Pendant of nacre, depicting a quadruped,

horizontally perforated, eye as concentric incision, concentric engravings on the body, max. 3.5 x 2.0 cm, Th. 0.2 cm.

Other grave goods: five ceramic vessels, one pendant made of lead, 57 beads made of shell, stone, whitish friable material (paste?).

Grave 19 (stone cist; not illustrated)

Pendant of stone (limestone?), depicting a quadruped, vertically perforated, two small dots on the body, originally part of a necklace of beads (see below), max. 2 x 1.2 x 1.5 cm.

Other grave goods: six ceramic vessels, two copper/bronze earrings, 15 flat shell rings (belt?), 12 shell beads (dress ornament), 395 beads made of stone, shell, bone and frit originally forming a necklace, 29 stone beads originally forming a bracelet (found in place).

Grave 20 (multiple burial in stone cist) [*Fig. 3*]

Pendant of nacre, depicting a quadruped, horizontally perforated, eye as a concentric incision, concentric engravings on the body, 3.0 x 2.2 cm, Th. 0.2 cm.

Pendant of nacre, depicting a quadruped, horizontally perforated, eye as a concentric incision, concentric engravings on the body, 2.3 x 1.6 cm, Th. 0.2 cm.

Pendant of nacre, bird with spread wings, horizontally perforated, feathers indicated as incised lines, head missing or not indicated, 2.0 x 2.4 cm, Th. 0.3 cm.

Pendant of nacre, depicting a bird with spread wings, horizontally perforated, feathers indicated as incised lines, head missing or not indicated, 1.4 x 1.7 cm, Th. 0.1 cm.

Pendant of stone (limestone?), depicting a quadruped, vertically perforated, two small dots on the body, 2.3 x 2 x 0.6 cm.

Pendant of stone, depicting a quadruped, head missing, vertically perforated, two circular incisions on the body, 2 x 1.5 x 0.6 cm.

Other grave goods: two ceramic vessels, two shell rings, 140 beads made of shell, frit, stone and clay.

Grave 21 (stone cist) [Fig. 4]

Pendant of nacre, depicting a quadruped (bull?), horizontally perforated, eye as concentric circle dotted in the middle, circle-and-dot engraving on the body, max. 3.0 x 2.4 cm, Th. 0.2–0.3 cm.

Four pendants of frit, representing ducks(?), horizontally perforated, max. 1.8 x 1.6 cm.

Other grave goods: four ceramic vessels, two copper/bronze bracelets, two copper/bronze earrings, one pendant made of bone, 232 beads made of bone, frit, stone and shell.

Dr. Dariusz Szeląg

Institute of Archaeology, University of Warsaw

00-927 Warsaw, Poland, ul. Krakowskie Przedmieście 26/28

daresz@uw.edu.pl

REFERENCES

Akkermans, P.M.M.G., Schwartz, G.M.

2003 *The Archaeology of Syria. From Complex Hunter-Gatherers to Early Urban Societies (c. 16,000–300 BC)*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Beyer, D., Jean-Marie, M.

2007 Le temple du DA III de la déesse Ninhursag à Mari : les dépôts votifs du Lieu Très Saint [in:] J.-C. Margueron, O. Rouault, P. Lombard (eds), *Akh-Purattim II*, Lyon: Maison de L'Orient et de la Méditerranée, 75–122

Bieliński, P.

1992 The first campaign of excavations on Tell Rad Shaqrah (Hassake Southern Dam Basin), *PAM 3 (Reports 1991)*, 77–85

1993 Tell Rad Shaqrah 1992. The fifth season of explorations in Northeast Syria, *PAM 4 (Reports 1992)*, 119–127

1994 Tell Rad Shaqrah 1993, *PAM 5 (Reports 1993)*, 154–163

1995 Tell Rad Shaqrah 1994, *PAM 6 (Reports 1994)*, 109–117

1996 Tell Rad Shaqrah. Excavations 1995, *PAM 7 (Reports 1995)*, 160–170

2010 Tell Arbid. Preliminary report on the results of the twelfth season of Syrian–Polish excavations, *PAM 19 (Reports 2007)*, 537–554

Curvers, H.H., Schwartz, G.M.

1990 Excavations at Tell al-Raqa'i: a small rural site of early urban Northern Mesopotamia, *AJA* 94, 3–23

(von den) Driesch, A.

1995 s.v. Mollusken [in:] *RLA VIII*, 349–354

- Dunham, S.
1993 Beads for babies, *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie* 83, 237–257
- Faber, W.
1983 s.v. Lamaštu [in:] *RIA* VI, 439–446
- Fortin, M.
1990 Rapport préliminaire sur la seconde campagne de fouilles à Tell ‘Atij et la première à Tell Gueda (automne 1987), sur le Moyen Khabour, *Syria* 67/2, 219–256
- Gensheimer, T.R.
1984 The role of shell in Mesopotamia: evidence for trade exchange with Oman and the Indus Valley, *Paléorient* 10/1, 65–73
- Golani, A., Nagar, Y.
2011 Newly discovered burials of the Chalcolithic and the Early Bronze Age I in Southern Canaan — evidence of cultural continuity? [in:] J.L. Lovell, Y.M. Rowan (eds), *Culture, Chronology and the Chalcolithic. Theory and Transition* [=Levant Supplementary Series 9], Oxford: Oxbow Books, 84–96
- Gut, R., Reade, J., Boehmer, R.M.
2001 Ninive — Das späte 3. Jahrtausend v. Chr. [in:] J.-W. Meyer, M. Novák, A. Pruss (eds), *Beiträge zur Vorderasiatischen Archäologie. Winfried Orthmann gewidmet*, Frankfurt am Main: Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, Archäologisches Institut, 74–129
- Hockmann, D.
2010 *Gräber und Gräfte in Assur I. Von der zweiten Hälfte des 3. bis zur Mitte des 2. Jahrtausends v. Chr* [=WVDOG 129], Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz
- Ilan, D.
1995 Mortuary practices at Tell Dan in the Middle Bronze Age: a reflection of Canaanite society and ideology [in:] S. Campbell, A. Green (eds), *The Archaeology of Death in the Ancient Near East* [=Oxbow Monograph 51], Oxford: Oxbow Books, 117–139
2002 Mortuary practices in Early Bronze Age Canaan, *Near Eastern Archaeology* 65/2, 92–104
- Joffe, A.H.
2003 Slouching toward Beersheva: Chalcolithic mortuary practices in local and regional context [in:] B.A. Nakhai (ed.), *The Near East in the Southwest. Essays in Honor of William G. Dever* [=AASOR 58], Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 45–68
- Koliński, R.
1996 Tell Rad Shaqrah 1991–1995, *Orient Express* 1996/3, 67–69
- Koliński, R., Ławecka, D.
1992 Report of Polish excavations at Tell Abu Hafur, North Syria 1988–1989. Area A, *DamMitt* 6, 177–246
- Kulemann-Ossen, S., Novák, M.
2000 ‘Kūbu und das “Kind im Topf”. Zur Symbolik von Topfbestattungen, *Altorientalische Forschungen* 27/1, 121–131
- Lebeau, M.
1993 *Tell Melebiya. Cinq campagnes de recherches sur le Moyen-Khabour (1984–1988)* [=Akkadica Supplementum IX], Leuven: Peeters Publishers

- Limper, K.
 1988 *Uruk. Perlen, Ketten, Anhänger. Grabungen 1912–1985* [=Ausgrabungen in Uruk-Warka 2], Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern
- (van) Loon, M.N. (ed.)
 2001 *Selenkahiye. Final Report on the University of Chicago and University of Amsterdam Excavations in the Tabqa Reservoir, Northern Syria, 1967–1975* [=Uitgaven van het Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul 91], Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul
- Ławecka, D.
 1998 Tell Rad Shaqrah (North Syria), Sector F, *Światowit* 41/A, 81–89
- Martin, L.
 2005 Frühbronzezeitliche Gräber [in:] S. Klengel-Brandt, S. Kulemann-Ossen, L. Martin, *Tall Knēdiğ. Die Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen des Vorderasiatischen Museums Berlin in Nordost-Syrien von 1993 bis 1998* [=WVDOG 113], Saarwellingen: Saarländische Druckerei und Verlag, 48–52
- Martin, L., Wartke, R.-B.
 1993–1994 Tall Abu Hğaira 1987–1990, *AfO* 40–41, 200–215
 2005 Kleinfunde, 2.8. Schmuck [in:] S. Klengel-Brandt, S. Kulemann-Ossen, L. Martin, *Tall Knēdiğ. Die Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen des Vorderasiatischen Museums Berlin in Nordost-Syrien von 1993 bis 1998* [=WVDOG 113], Saarwellingen: Saarländische Druckerei und Verlag, 250–295
- Miglus, P.A., Strommenger, E.
 2002 *Tall Bi'a / Tuttul VIII. Stadtbefestigungen, Häuser und Tempel* [=WVDOG 103], Saarbrücken: Saarbrücker Druckerei und Verlag
- Moorey, P.R.S.
 1994 *Ancient Mesopotamian Materials and Industries. The Archaeological Evidence*, Oxford: Clarendon Press (reprint, Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1999)
- Moortgat, A., Moortgat-Correns, U.
 1976 *Tell Chuera in Nordost-Syrien. Vorläufiger Bericht über die siebente Grabungskampagne 1974* [=Schriften der Max Freiherr von Oppenheim-Stiftung 9], Berlin: Mann
- Moortgat-Correns, U.
 1988 *Tell Chuera in Nordost-Syrien. Vorläufige Berichte über die neunte und zehnte Grabungskampagne 1982 und 1983* [=Schriften der Max Freiherr von Oppenheim-Stiftung 13–14], Berlin: Mann
- Munčaeв, R.M., Merpert, N.Â., Amirov, Š.N.
 2004 *Tell' Hazna I. Kul'tovo-administrativnyj centr IV–III tys. do n.è. v Severo-vostočnoj Sirii*, Moskva: Paleograf
- Musche, B.
 1992 *Vorderasiatischer Schmuck von den Anfängen bis zur Zeit der Achaemeniden (ca. 10,000–330 v. Chr.)*, Leiden–New York: E.J. Brill
- Orthmann, W., Klein, H., Kühne, C., Novak, M., Pruss, A., Vila, E., Weicken, H.-M., Wener, A.
 1995 *Ausgrabungen in Tell Chuera in Nordost-Syrien I. Vorbericht über die Grabungskampagnen 1986 bis 1992* [=Vorderasiatische Forschungen der Max Freiherr von Oppenheim-Stiftung 2], Saarbrücken: Saarbrücker Druckerei und Verlag
- Parrot, A.
 1935 Les fouilles de Mari. Première campagne (hiver 1933–1934). Rapport préliminaire (second article), *Syria* 16/2, 117–140

- 1956 *Le temple d'Ishtar* [=BAH 65; *Mission archéologique de Mari* 1], Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner
- Schwartz, G.M., Curvers, H.H.
1993–1994 Tall ar-Raqa'i 1986–1993, *AfO* 40–41, 246–257
- Sołtysiak, A.
2006 Short fieldwork report. Tell Rad Shaqra (Syria), seasons 1994–1995, *Studies in Historical Anthropology* 3, 138–149
- Strommenger, E.
1979 Ausgrabungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft in Habuba Kabira [in:] D.N. Freedman (ed.), *Archeological Reports from the Tabqa Dam Project — Euphrates Valley, Syria* [=AASOR 44], Cambridge, MA: American Schools of Oriental Research, 63–78
- Strommenger, E., Kohlmeyer, K.
2000 *Ausgrabungen in Tall Bi'a, Tuttul III. Die Schichten des 3. Jahrtausends v. Chr. im Zentralhügel E* [=WVDOG 101], Saarbrücken: Saarbrücker Druckerei und Verlag
- Strommenger, E., Kohlmeyer, K. (eds)
1998 *Ausgrabungen in Tall Bi'a, Tuttul I. Die altorientalischen Bestattungen* [=WVDOG 96], Saarbrücken: Saarbrücker Druckerei und Verlag
- Suleiman, A., Quenet, P.
2012 *Trois campagnes de fouilles syriennes à Tell Abu Hujeira I. Hassake (1988–1990). Cinquième à septième parties: inventaire analytique des objets, étude des outils de silex et annexes* [=Documents d'archéologie syrienne 17], Damascus: Ministère de la Culture, Direction Générale des Antiquités et des Musées
- Szeląg, D.
2002 Zwierzyniec szakrański. Zawieszki i paciorki zoomorficzne z grobów dziecięcych na stanowisku Tell Rad Shaqrah (Syria), [The Shaqrah zoo. Zoomorphic pendants and beads from child graves at the site of Tell Rad Shaqrah (Syria)], *Światowit* 45/A, 205–214 [in Polish]
2013 Shell objects from Tell Rad Shaqrah (Syria), *PAM* 22 (*Research* 2010), 587–616
- Tourtet, F.
2010 “Demons at home”. The presence of demonic figures in the ancient Near Eastern domestic architecture, [in:] H. Kühne (ed.), *Dūr-Katlimmu 2008 and Beyond* [=Studia Chaburensia 1], Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 241–262
- Valentini, S.
2011 Burials and funerary practices [in:] M. Lebeau (ed.), *Associated Regional Chronologies for the Ancient Near East and the Eastern Mediterranean. Jezirah* [=ARCANE 1], Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 267–286
- Woolley, L.
1955 *Ur Excavations IV. The Early Periods*, Philadelphia: Allen, Lane & Scott