

Lions on Assyrian Wall Reliefs

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One notable but infrequent subject selected for decoration upon the palace walls of the Assyrian kings of the first millennium B.C. was the royal hunt of lions.¹ Lions as the object of the hunt are mentioned in texts of Assyrian rulers in the second millennium B.C.; however the earliest known appearance of these animals occurs on the sculptured slabs of Ashurnasirpal II (883-859) found in Nimrud and Nineveh.² Relief decoration depicting the lion hunt was not used again until the reign of Ashurbanipal (668-627), when that king had himself portrayed hunting lions in a variety of ways. At this time greater attention was devoted to the sequence of posed actions assumed by the animals during the chase. One further example of the royal hunt of lions was discovered at Til Barsip where, however, the dating of the fragmentary wall paintings remains problematic. Lions were used for relief decoration in the reigns of other kings during the Neo-Assyrian Empire but within different contexts where their function seems to have been either decorative or symbolic. All of these representations—with the exception of the portal lions which have been discussed elsewhere³—are included in this study of lions, restricting itself to two separate aspects of the lion motif: the stylistic changes that occurred from the ninth to the seventh centuries, and the lion-types developed from the poses chosen for representation.

1. The lion style

Ashurnasirpal II. Lions of this period are characterized as brutish, massive and overpowering in appearance, yet a precise linear quality to the form is conveyed (Figs. 1-3). The heaviness of the body is occasionally stressed by the irregular groundline beneath the

* The photographs used in this article were obtained through the kind permission of the Trustees of the British Museum and the Musée du Louvre. I am grateful to Dr. Oscar White Muscarella who read a later version of the manuscript and made several useful comments.

1 Lions existed in the Near East until the very end of the last century. There were two variants, one nameless and the other possessing a black shaggy mane. See G. Rawlinson, *The Five Great Monarchies of the Ancient Near Eastern World* (2nd ed., 1871), 1: 39-40; A. H. Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon* (London, 1853), 487.

2 For the study of the royal hunt on the bas-reliefs of this period, see P. Albenda, "Ashurnasirpal II Lion Hunt Relief BM124534," *JNES* 31 (1972), 167-178.

3 T. A. Madhloom, *The Chronology of Neo-Assyrian Art* (London, 1970), 100-101.

animal's torso. The power emanating from within the wild beast culminates in the region of the head where an animated fierceness is expressed through the careful rendering of the many facial details. Its gaping mouth invariably exposes upper and lower canine teeth, fangs, and a curled tongue protruding beyond the lower jaw. The snout of the lion is exceptionally long, flattened at its end, and curves up to produce a series of furrows that terminate along the inner edge of the eye. The eye is usually drawn large and framed by heavy eyelids. Another characteristic detail is the "rosette" pattern of four or five petals that represent the moustache, which is exceptional for its fully developed decorativeness.⁴

A reversed S-shaped ruff of hair narrow at its base behind the small chin widens gradually as it frames the face in such a manner that a recessed forehead above the raised brow is left bare. The animal's ear is attached to the ruff and folds back in a double flap. The texture of the mane is executed with a series of wavy tufts, each of which is decorated further with incised lines. An extension of the mane appears on the underside of the body and consists of three rows of tufts arranged to form a chevron pattern.⁵ Another common feature is the ventral mane and the tufts sometimes bordering the foreleg.⁶ The musculature of the animal is worked in a linear fashion and includes the stylized U deltoid muscle of the foreleg⁷ and the W-shaped muscle on the hindquarter.⁸ The shoulder of the lion appears high on the body and in several instances it possesses the addition of a crudely incised torsional hair whorl.⁹ A further notable feature of the lion is the large claw that protrudes from the ruff of hair at the terminal of the tail, a curious trait that is nonetheless based upon reality.¹⁰

Shalmaneser III. No wall reliefs of this king (858-843) exist. The single occurrence of lions is found upon one register of the so-called Black Obelisk (Fig. 4). Its workmanship is cursory; the subject matter has been cut into the flat surface of the stone and the background leveled to leave the subjects in relief. The scene upon the register depicts two lions in an open landscape, one standing and the other leaping to attack a stag. Their ferocity is conveyed by the snarling mouth. The narrow ruff bordering the head is plain, and the mane, decorated with incised lines, extends behind the high shoulder in a V-shape turned sideways, then continues along the underside of the body. Two details that betray a misunderstanding

4 At present, no examples of second millennium B.C. Assyrian lions exist to enable us to trace the development of this detail.

5 The chevron pattern was often used for ornamentation in art works of Ashurnasirpal II. See the comments of E. Porada, *Corpus of Ancient Near Eastern Seals in North American Collections* (1948), 1:73.

6 It appears again in more decorative manner on the portal lion from Arslan Tash, dated to the reign of Tiglath-pileser III. F. Thureau-Dangin and others, *Arslan-Tash* (Paris, 1931), 54-55, 64-65, pl. III.

7 Madhloom traces this motif, *Chronology*, 103-104.

8 For the changes of thigh stylizations in later periods, see E. Akurgal, *The Art of Greece: Its Origins in the Mediterranean and Near East* (New York, 1968), 38, figs. 5 a-p.

9 This motif was studied by H. Kantor, "The Shoulder Ornament of Near Eastern Lions," *JNES* 6 (1947), 250-274.

10 Rawlinson, *Five Great Monarchies*, 221.

of the leonine form are the pointed ears turned forward above the head¹¹ and the long bushy tail.¹² The sources for the rendering of these animals, lacking the monumentality and animation found on the reliefs of the preceding period, is probably to be sought in contemporary decorative arts.¹³

Sargon II. Lions in the reign of Sargon II (722-705) are unusual in two important ways. Firstly, the lion is shown held in the arm of a hero-type figure of monumental size, thereby implying a symbolic intent behind the representation of this particular group (Fig. 5)¹⁴ Secondly, the frontal animal head connected abruptly to the profile torso conveys a partial impression of attached sculpture.¹⁵ The uneasy helplessness of the dangling lion is reinforced by its distended paws. The expressiveness of the face is accentuated by the snarling mouth, open or closed,¹⁶ below which is a heavy angular jawl. The moustache is well-defined beneath a muzzle having symmetrically arranged furrows that extend into the cheek area. A large fleshy pouch encases each of the small eyes, and between them, at the ridge of the nose, appear two prominent swellings. The characteristic profile view of the lion head can be more readily judged by a large bronze weight from Khorsabad that displays traits similar to those found on the wall reliefs (Fig. 6). Framing the oval head of the lion, its most distinguishing feature, is a ruff decorated with radial tufts. The ears are set high above the ruff.¹⁷ The full and irregular tufts of the mane are arranged in parallel rows that extend to the hair on the belly and on the haunches.

Ashurbanipal. In this period the stylistic manner of lions undergoes a remarkable transformation whereby a naturalistic tendency prevails among the numerous renderings of these creatures. This is particularly evident among the many lions that appear in the large hunt-

11 The head is reminiscent of the lion-griffin: B. Goldman, "The Development of the Lion-Griffin," *AJA* 64 (1960), 32of.

12 The source for the drawing of the tail may be the fox or jackal known to exist in the Near East. However, renderings of these animals in near eastern art are unknown to me. Parallels for the representation of the jackal are provided by Egyptian examples. See P. Fox, *Tutankhamun's Treasure* (London, 1951), 26, pl. 39.

13 See below, n. 37.

14 E. D. Van Buren identifies a similar type of male figure combating a lion, on a clay plaque, with the hero Gilgamesh; *Clay Figurines of Babylonia and Assyria*, *YOS* 16 (1930), 206, fig. 253. Reasons for the reappearance of this theme in the period of Sargon II are suggested by Porada, *Corpus*, 92.

15 A distinction should be made between works showing the head projected in full relief and figures *en face*. In the latter case all the raised portions are of equal depth. The former style has a long ancestry extending back to the Sumerian period when it was applied to decorative art works. Cf. E. Strommenger, *5000 Years of the Art of Mesopotamia* (New York, 1964), figs. 24-28. A later development of this technique on metal vessels from Iran is considered by Porada to be a continuation of an Elamite tradition; *The Art of Ancient Iran* (New York, 1965), 91, pl. 22a, fig. 61.

16 Strommenger, *ibid.*, pls. 222-223.

17 A similar ear treatment is given to several lion bowls from the Near East; O. W. Muscarella, "Lion Bowls from Hasanlu," *Archaeology* 18 (1965), 41-46. For recent comments concerning another bronze lion weight, see T. C. Mitchell, "The Bronze Lion Weight from Abydos," *Iran* 11 (1973), 173-175.

ing scenes from Room C (Figs. 7-14).¹⁸ The feeling for realism is effected especially in the variety of actions depicted so that each animal seems to possess its own unique stance. Furthermore, one encounters for the first time a desire to delineate the subject as a three-dimensional form, leading inevitably to the problems of foreshortening and space recession, oftentimes resulting in awkward solutions. Concomitant with this innovative venture into objective realism, one can distinguish another trend that endeavors to attain a harmonious quality. This was accomplished by the refining of select features into a marked degree of orderliness and by the care given to the balance between patterned and plain surfaces, whether it involves parts of the same subject or figure groupings such as those found on the wall reliefs of several registers from Room S (Figs. 15-19).¹⁹ The combined descriptive and decorative treatment revealed in the lion representations of this period often results in a nicety of design. A probable cause for the renewed surge in the art style of the period may have been the result of campaigns into Egypt undertaken by Ashurbanipal²⁰ and his father before him, Esarhaddon.²¹ These incursions into Egypt brought Assyria into direct contact with the monumental arts of that country, thereby furnishing a source of artistic ideas that had an effect both on Assyrian compositions²² and the lion style.²³ There is some indication, too, that a reciprocal influence occurred in Egyptian works.²⁴

The drawing of the lion on the Ashurbanipal reliefs is often defined with lines that tend to express the main movements of the animal, in contrast to earlier types where the stress is upon the demarcation of body features. Muscle details are softened and denote a fleshy torso, while the animal's weightiness extends to its extremities, especially to the large knobby paws. The face reveals many features modified from earlier types. The eye, drawn in true profile, is framed by narrow lids set into a fleshy area. Below the eye is a curved line often attached to the facial folds formalized into a three-prong motif. The furrows on the shortened snout consist of delicate wavy lines drawn almost horizontally to the inner edge of the eye. The moustache retains the decorative palmette pattern found on earlier examples. The open mouth is very shallow, occasionally disclosing an upper and lower fang above a small chin. Facial distinctions are made between the active and impassive lion, for in the latter type all wrinkles are omitted; furthermore, in the dead lion the eye becomes a narrow slit encased in a fleshy pouch, and between the double S-curve lines of the closed mouth and chin appears a small tongue.

18 For an account of the discoveries of these bas-reliefs, see H. Rassam, *Asshur and the Land of Nimrod* (New York, 1887), 25f.

19 C. J. Gadd, *The Stones of Assyria* (London, 1936), 187-188.

20 Pritchard, *ANET*², 294f.

21 *Ibid.*, 291f.

22 Akurgal, *The Art of Greece*, 46. For the study of composition types, see W. Nagel, *Die neuassyrischen Reliefstile unter Sanherib und Assurbanaplū* (Berlin, 1967), 18-24.

23 Akurgal, *The Art of Greece*, 43, n. 122.

24 W. Stevenson Smith, *The Art and Architecture of Ancient Egypt* (The Pelican History of Art, 1965), 239.

Framing the lower half of the lion's face is a wide ruff decorated with linear striations or else with rows of tufts that at times resemble a chevron pattern. The ear is usually folded back, except in several instances where an open round ear is given to a dead lion,²⁵ and marks the start of the mane embellished with a tufted pattern exhibiting a pre-determined arrangement. An exceptional aspect of the lion is the absence of a ventral mane, a feature found on all the animals of the preceding periods. A new detail is the clump of hair that covers the elbow of the foreleg. The hair whorl makes its appearance on several animals that belong to one series of wall reliefs,²⁶ but here the design occurs in the mane of the lion and merges with the tufted hair. (Figs. 15-16, 18).

Til Barsip Lions. The lion hunt episodes comprise one portion of the extensive wall paintings at Til Barsip,²⁷ and the date proposed for these art works has been assigned variously to the reigns of Tiglath-pileser III,²⁸ Sargon II,²⁹ Esarhaddon,³⁰ and Ashurbanipal.³¹ A factor to be considered is whether these frescoes were done at one occasion or over an extended period. It is reasonable to speculate that sections of the paintings at Til Barsip were accomplished at different times since, in the medium of wall painting, some degree of surface damage is a predictable eventuality and repainting or additions to suit personal tastes can be readily produced.

The lions drawn in the Til Barsip hunting scenes from Room XXVII were unfortunately in a fragmentary condition at the time of their discovery (Figs. 20-23). However, a lion style can be gained through the synthesis of those portions that still existed. An initial distinction must be made between the decorative quality of the Til Barsip lions and their counterparts on the carved reliefs since, in the absence of modelled surfaces, all details in the former examples were accomplished with solid lines. Thus the main features of the Til Barsip lions must be determined by whatever principal details are delineated. The most conspicuous aspect is the head of the lion, its profile distinguished by a small protruding nostril, vertical ridges of the furrows, and a small swelling above the area of the now missing eye. A large prominent lower jaw extends slightly beyond the outer limit of the

25 A precedent for this detail is found on an orthostat relief from Carchemish; E. Akurgal, *The Art of the Hittites* (London, 1962), fig. 110.

26 BM 124875-124876.

27 F. Thureau-Dangin and M. Dunand, *Til Barsip* (Paris, 1936), pl. LIII.

28 Thureau-Dangin amends his earlier opinion that several paintings originated in this period, *ibid.*, 43f. Rooms XXII and XXVII are dated to the period of Ashurbanipal. For further comments that several frescoes were completed under the influence of the Turtan Shamshi-ilu, see A. Moortgat, *The Art of Ancient Mesopotamia* (London and New York, 1969), 140-143.

29 R. D. Barnett, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs in the British Museum* (London, 1970), 11. Two stages of wall paintings are identified by Hrouda. He assigns the first stage to a period shortly after the reign of Tiglath-pileser III; *Die Kulturgeschichte des Assyrischen Flachbildes* (Bonn, 1965), 114.

30 Madhlom, *Chronology*, 23-26.

31 This date has been accepted by several scholars for the scenes in Rooms XXII, XXVII; cf. Hrouda, *Assyrischen Flachbildes*, 114, n. 8; Moortgat, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, 155.

snout. Across the wide ruff framing the face is a round ear. A jagged contour line is utilized to indicate the visible portions of hair found on the ruff, the decorated mane, the belly, and the ventral mane. An unusual decoration is the torsional whorl on the hind-quarters.³² Several dead lions slung across the chariot present impassive facial features — slit eye and protruding tongue. The Til Barsip lions differ greatly from the Ashurbanipal lions, and, therefore, it does not seem likely that they belong to the same period. For instance, the expressive face with its protruding jowls finds no parallels among the Ashurbanipal lions; also, the ventral mane never appears on the latter examples. The stylistic features of the Til Barsip lions indicate closer affinities with the lions of Sargon II, to which period they are probably to be assigned.³³

On another fragmentary painting from Room XXIV depicting a presentation scene, a portion of a lion appears at the feet of a personage, presumably the Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser III (Fig. 24).³⁴ This lion has been identified as a domesticated pet but a comparable scene of Ashurnasirpal II suggests that this episode illustrates the ritual after the successful hunt.³⁵ The animal is distinctive for its ferocious expression; its C-shaped gaping mouth has a set of upper and lower canine teeth. The profile of the face consists of a small round swelling just above the fleshy eye, a pattern of concentric furrows on the nose, and a curved snout. The mane just above the face is indicated, but nothing beyond this is visible.

2. Lion types

Notable kinds of movements acquired by lions can be distinguished and assigned to different categories of actions. Several of these postures are essentially standardized renderings that have a long ancestry and were intended to satisfy specific situations, while others illustrate a relaxation of prescribed poses and therefore afford a greater variety of solutions for a particular theme. The main categories into which types of actions can be placed are: the running attack, the leaping attack, the upright lion, the fallen lion.

Running attack. One known example of this type appears in the period of Ashurnasirpal II.³⁶ The action of the animal is motivated by an oncoming chariot in pursuit. In its flight, the snarling lion turns its head back in a gesture of counter-attack. Its forward motion is

32 See my comments in *JNES* 31 (1972), 215.

33 The king on horseback is identifiable with Sargon II because, unlike the similar representations of Ashurbanipal, he wears the conical headdress and is attired in the knee-length tunic that has closer parallels with garments worn by that king. Cf. the treatment of the costume and pose of the king shown in the Til Barsip painting with mounted riders represented during the royal hunt of Sargon II, G. Loud, *Khorsabad*, Oriental Institute Publications 38 (1936), 75, fig. 87. The Assyrian king hunting in his chariot (Salle XXVIIe) likewise shows close affinities with representations of Sargon II in a similar pose, during his military campaigns.

34 Thureau-Dangin, *Til Barsip*, 54-55. Moortgat assigns this relief to the period of Ashurbanipal. However, the types of sandals worn by the personages go out of style by the period of Sargon II.

35 See Moortgat, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, pl. 266. Representations of tame lions occur in the period of Ashurbanipal; cf. *ibid.*, pl. 283, and Strommenger, *Art of Mesopotamia*, pl. 245.

36 G. R. Meyer, *Durch vier Jahrtausende Altvorderasiatischer Kultur* (Berlin, 1962), Abb. 57.

is heightened by the wide running gait while, simultaneously, the backward thrust of the head recognizes the immediate threat of its opponent. This combined action of turning back defensively while advancing forward is common with wild creatures in similar circumstances.

The offensive running attack appears on the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, where is shown a running lion with outstretched paw overtaking a fleeing stag (Fig. 4). A more notable appearance of this gesture of confrontation occurs among the lion hunt frescoes at Til Barsip (Fig. 20). There the animal, although mortally wounded, assumes all the qualities of a formidable adversary against the onrushing royal chariot. Yet the pawing lion motif is a type that was traditionally employed in the decorative arts, as for example on the ornament designs of Ashurnasirpal II³⁷ and on an early eighth century seal design of Adad-nirari III.³⁸ That these works continue a traditional subject is suggested by its occurrence upon clay plaques of probable early second millennium B.C. date³⁹ and on a cylinder seal impression of Niqmedu, King of Ugarit, from Ras Shamra.⁴⁰

The running attack is developed further on the reliefs of Ashurbanipal, at which time it is repeated on several of the small reliefs.⁴¹ A series of related actions are each rendered by a different animal, the total effect of which is a narrative that establishes a time sequence.⁴² The sequence commences with a stalking lion emerging from a cage, its head kept low, followed by a lion with a fast running gait in which the increased movement is indicated by the low elevation of the forelegs (Fig. 15). This momentum culminates in a leaping attack directed against the steadfast person of the king. This series of sequential motions is perhaps the result of selective observations that chose poses which conveyed purposively the steady increased velocity leading to a climactic situation—the lion's confrontation with the Assyrian ruler.

Leaping attack. The main criterion for this lion type is the movement of the body directed upward to produce an oblique stance. The earliest instance of such an aggressive lion is the one that leaps towards the rear end of the chariot of Ashurnasirpal II (Fig. 1). At that moment its forelegs come to rest against the chariot wheels, which thereby stops the forward motion of the beast, while at the same time its hind legs are spread apart to balance the halting action of the animal. A similar stance is given to a lion of the Ashurbanipal period (Fig. 16); here it attacks from the rear a horse galloping alongside one mounted by the king. This posture is a direct descendant of a lion type that appears on

37 A. H. Layard, *The Monuments of Nineveh* (London, 1849), pls. 46, 1; 49, 3. See J. V. Canby, "Decorated Garments in Ashurnasirpal's Sculpture," *Iraq* 31 (1971), 33f.

38 B. Parker, "Seals and Seal Impressions from the Nimrud Excavations, 1955-58," *Iraq* 24 (1962), 38-39, fig. 9.

39 Van Buren, *Clay Figurines*, 149-150, figs. 196-197.

40 C. F. A. Schaeffer, *Ugaritica III*, Mission de Ras Shamra VIII (1956), 77-80, figs. 100-102.

41 BM 124875-124877; BM 124886-124887. For an illustration of the entire sequence, see H. Frankfort, *Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient* (Paperback Edition, 1970), fig. 210.

42 On the subject of the "continuous style," see H. G. Güterbock, "Narration in Anatolian, Syrian, and Assyrian Art," *AJA* 61 (1957), 64-65.

Middle Assyrian cylinder seals of the 13th century, where the adversaries include such wild creatures as the bull, ibex, and stag.⁴³ However, upon the large lion hunt reliefs from Room C this action attains greater freedom of expression, and in each illustration where the lion is shown charging, its leap towards the royal chariot results in a different moment of completion. One lion during its desperate leap frantically grips the wheel while tearing at it with its mouth (Fig. 8). The violent movement is defined vividly by the twist of the upper torso, presenting to the spectator an almost full view of the animal's head. This exceptional presentation may be a fully developed motif of a type whose antecedents are traceable to second millennium B.C. works of art in the Near East. On a 14th century basalt stele from Beth-Shan⁴⁴ appears a standing lion attacked by a dog that turns its torso to reveal a frontal head. Similarly, a clay plaque from Babylon, dated to the 13th century, illustrates a lion with frontally turned head attacking a wild boar.⁴⁵ This posture recurs in the depiction of a lion attempting to fend off its assailants, shown on a Hittite relief from Alaca Hüyük.⁴⁶

Elsewhere on the large reliefs of Ashurbanipal another leaping lion is thwarted by spears that pierce its chest (Fig. 7). The anguish of the impact, revealed by the visible staring eye, reaches to the taut distended paws and to the tufts of hair that rise away from the mane. By far the most violent reaction to a stopped attack is shown by a lion whose leap is frozen in mid-air and whose stiffened body begins to fall backward as an immediate consequence of the force of several weapons thrust into its throat (Fig. 9). The drama of the moment rises up from the hind legs of the lion, drawn small in proportion to the much larger outstretched forelegs, and continues to the upturned head with round open eye, to the heavy mane with its external double fringe of tufts flowing outward.

Upright lion. This pose does not appear on the reliefs until the period of Ashurbanipal when several animals are shown in this manner under different circumstances. A profile rendering of a lion standing with its hind legs planted firmly on the ground occurs in close conjunction with the Assyrian king on foot who plunges a dagger into its body while clutching the beast by its throat (Fig. 18). The lion seems immobile and lacks the momentum of a leaping attack to which the pose can be related. A similar scene is repeated elsewhere on a relief, now lost, where again the upright lion is put to death in exactly the same manner by the Assyrian ruler who is now garbed in a different costume.⁴⁷ In another segment on the lost relief the duel between the king on foot and the lion shows the former dispatching the latter with a spear, but here Ashurbanipal grips the lion by the ear. Increased animation is attained by the lion facing its protagonist, for it takes a wide stride

43 Porada, *Corpus*, nos. 602-605.

44 H. O. Thompson, "Tell el-Husn—Biblical Beth-Shan," *The Biblical Archaeologist* 30 (1967), 117-120, fig. 4.

45 See R. Koldewey, *Das Wieder Erstehende Babylon* (Leipzig, 1925), 240, Abb. 159; W. Speiser, *Vorderasiatische Kunst* (Berlin, 1952), Abb. 69 unten.

46 Akurgal, *The Art of the Hittites*, pl. 95.

47 Gadd, *The Stones of Assyria*, 187-188, pl. 38.

and extends its forelegs obliquely in opposite directions. A standardized version of this particular theme was utilized for the royal seals of the Assyrian kings, designed as a circular stamp, as early as the reign of Shalmaneser III.⁴⁸ In the reign of Ashurnasirpal II, however, the lion with forelegs outstretched forward and back appears among the ornamental decorations fending off the king on foot, and in a vain attempt to flee turns its head to confront its human foe.⁴⁹ This fleeing upright lion type appears on the wall reliefs from Carchemish and Malatya, but here the animal's body is directed in a near horizontal position.⁵⁰

On the reliefs, another scene of exceptional interest has Ashurbanipal hold the tail of an upright lion attempting to stride away from the royal personage while twisting its head back to snarl at its antagonist (Fig. 19). Like the previous examples this animal, too, extends its forelegs in the usual manner. The unique motif of holding an upright lion by its tail seems to have no counterparts in the Neo-Assyrian period. The closest parallels are to be found in the glyptic art of the Middle Assyrian period, where the attacker holds the roaring lion either by its hind legs⁵¹ or by one hind leg and tail,⁵² thereby pulling the animal off the ground. A more direct antecedent was employed on a Syrian seal impression⁵³ illustrating a nude human figure who reaches forward to clutch the tail of a lion leaping away as it turns its head back, while his other hand is raised to plunge a sword into the open mouth of the beast. This seal design recalls a third millennium theme of attacks against wild animals, particularly lions, in which the animal stands on its hind legs and is held by its tail. Such scenes occur in the glyptic art of the Early Dynastic⁵⁴ and Akkad periods.⁵⁵

An upright lion with its forelegs extended forward and back recurs again and forms one of a pair of beasts that attack king Ashurbanipal on horseback (Fig. 17). The drawing of this creature combines the oblique thrust of a leaping attack with the steadfast stance of a standing lion. Similar renderings of this animal type confronting the king in his chariot, or else repelling a rampant bull, occur on the decorative ornaments of Ashurnasirpal II.⁵⁶

48 For a discussion of the royal seal, see A. J. Sachs, "The Late Assyrian Royal-Seal Type," *Iraq* 15 (1953) 167-170; and A. R. Millard, "The Assyrian Royal Seal Type Again," *Iraq* 27 (1965), 12-16. This motif was applied to ivory and metal works from Ziwiyeh; see *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (April, 1963), figs. 14, 17.

49 Layard, *The Monuments of Nineveh*, pls. 8 and 49, 1.

50 Akurgal, *The Art of the Hittites*, pls. 105, 113.

51 T. Beran, "Assyrische Glyptik des 14. Jahrhunderts," *ZA NF* 18 (1957), 166-167, Abb. 42.

52 A. Moortgat, "Assyrische Glyptik des 12. Jahrhunderts," *ZA NF* 14 (1944), 25-26, Abb. 4.

53 H. Seyrig, "Antiquités syriennes. 86. Quelques cylindres syriens," *Syria* 40 (1963), 254 f., pl. XXI, 2.

54 Porada, *Corpus*, nos. 71, 76.

55 *Ibid.*, no. 154.

56 Layard, *The Monuments of Nineveh*, pls. 48, 2 and 50, 1. Anepigraphic seal-impressions from Judah showing the upright lion type are assembled by E. Stern, *BASOR* 202 (1971), 9-10.

Certainly the most remarkable variant is the depiction of an upright striding lion with arms bent outward, standing alone in the field, its head turned up in full view (Fig. 10). The flattened frontal face provides an unexpected opportunity to display facial features arranged symmetrically, a characteristic extending to the base of the mane. The nicely patterned face is marred by the long arrow that pierces through one eye and out the cheek on the opposite side. Related to this example is a lion *en face*, its head positioned sideways, attacking king Ashurbanipal on foot.⁵⁷ This facial feature is typical of lion types found in third millennium glyptic art works.⁵⁸ Into this category of lion types may be placed the frontally turned lions of the Sargon II period (Fig. 5). The dangling posture of these animals is drawn nearly upright, and the tense movement of their limbs is reminiscent of the later related types exhibiting open paws.

Fallen lions. These creatures who were always doomed in the hunt are displayed in two aspects of their death, either dying or dead. Both aspects are combined in one representation of the fallen lion upon the relief of Ashurnasirpal II (Fig. 2). Here the animal has fallen to the ground beneath the chariot, a certain sign of death. Yet the wild beast still struggles to crawl, as indicated by the bend of its hind legs and the movement of one foreleg partially raised. The gaping mouth imparts the final roar of anguish emitted by the animal in its death throes. On another relief of the same period (Fig. 3), a further aspect of the animal's death is presented. Here the posture of the lion remains essentially the same, but now its head is lowered and the mouth is closed with only a faint snarl indicated. The representation of a dead lion beneath the bodies of chariot horses appears on several reliefs of Ashurbanipal, and in every instance the limp form is twisted and completely lifeless.⁵⁹

The portrayal of fallen lions on the large reliefs of Ashurbanipal presents the most perceptive rendering of animals in ancient near eastern art. The sensitive drawings reveal a deliberate study of these creatures in actual situations, and the endeavor to represent them as three-dimensional forms. The sometimes awkward results betray the newness of an approach that attempted to break away from the long established formula of depicting subject matter as two-dimensional to avoid the destruction of the flat picture plane. The many renderings of fallen lions show the numerous phases leading to the death of a lion, although what is actually portrayed on the reliefs are many different animals rather than one in a sequence of movements, such as was done on the small reliefs. The initial motion in this series is the halting action of a lion,⁶⁰ fatally wounded by arrows, as it struggles to walk under the failing strength of its body, artfully shown by the dragging movement of the legs and the blood gushing forth from the mouth of the lowered head. In the next phase appears a lion exhausted from the vain attempt to drag its hindquarters, already paralyzed and stiff, and all the while blood pours forth from its half-open mouth (Fig. 11).

57 E. Unger, *ZA* 31 (1917-18), 231-233.

58 A. Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel* (Berlin, 1940), nos. 112, 116, 154.

59 Cf. Strommenger, *Art of Mesopotamia*, pls. 248, 253.

60 *Ibid.*, pl. 250.

A similar posture is taken by a wounded lioness which makes a heroic effort to drag her paralyzed body forward while, simultaneously, seemingly crying in pain.⁶¹ Similar to the stance of the dragging lion is a seated one, its head hanging low and spouting blood as life ebbs away (Fig. 12).⁶² The representation of this posture appears again in the photograph of a relief, now missing,⁶³ and on the drawing of a lost relief.⁶⁴

In the drawing of dead lions on the Ashurbanipal reliefs no posture is identical, thus confirming a true concern for portraying what was observed. A lion whose heavy body is about to collapse to the ground stiffens at that moment of death immediately following a final turning action of the head (Fig. 13). A detail of particular expressiveness is the rendering of the paws, each of which is distinct and paired to convey the contrasting motions of life and death, that is, animation and inertia. The heaviness of the dead form of a lioness poised just above the ground (Fig. 7), no longer supported by its limbs, is emphasized by the exaggerated curve of the neck, forcing the head to the chest, and limp foreleg. The forms of dead lions lying upon the ground present a variety of contortions. Lions with twisted torsos lie either on their stomach, on their back, or on their side. In some instances the limbs are drawn in foreshortened manner to denote that they project in space away from the body (Figs. 7, 14). In related scenes these animals are seen being carried away by attendants,⁶⁵ and one group of four limp lions is placed at the feet of the Assyrian king, who performs a ritual libation above their bodies.⁶⁶

In summation: lions were included in compositions which expressed the standard theme of man's heroic feats against wild beasts. It is evident, too, that some depictions of the lion-hunt display the Assyrian king's actual participation in the ritual sport.⁶⁷ A more practical reason for his actions taken against lions may have stemmed from the periodic need to destroy these animals when their numbers became a serious threat to the populace, a situation known to have occurred in the reign of Ashurbanipal.⁶⁸ Lion poses shown on Assyrian works of art generally repeated examples of much earlier date and this reveals a reliance upon an established iconography of lion types. However, in the course of the Neo-Assyrian period stylistic modifications allowed the representations of lions to attain special characteristics which made them distinguishable from one another. In the seventh century there occurred a further development in the drawing of lions, involving a trend toward realism. This led to the reinterpretation of standard postures that permitted flexibility when lions were displayed in a variety of circumstances. An important outcome of this process was the creation of new lion poses.

61 Ibid.

62 A second example appears on slab BM 124855-124856.

63 Gadd, *The Stones of Assyria*, 183; illustrated in Frankfort, *Art and Architecture*, fig. 213.

64 Gadd, *The Stones of Assyria*, pl. 37.

65 Ibid., pls. 38, 45.

66 Moortgat, *Ancient Mesopotamia*, pl. 288.

67 See above, n. 2.

68 D. D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia* (Chicago, 1927; reprint ed. 1968), 2: 363.



Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



Fig. 4



Fig. 5



Fig. 6



Fig. 7

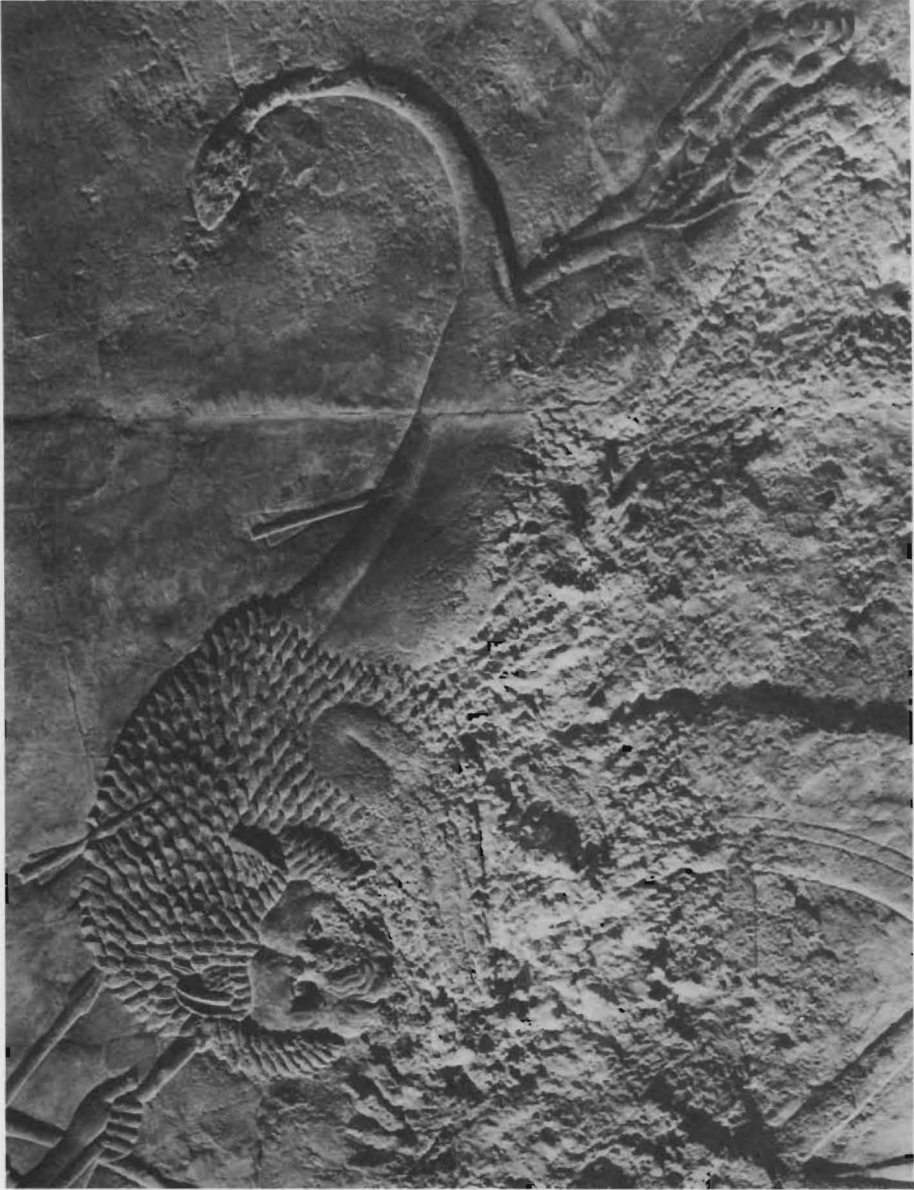


Fig. 8



Fig. 9



Fig. 10



Fig. 11

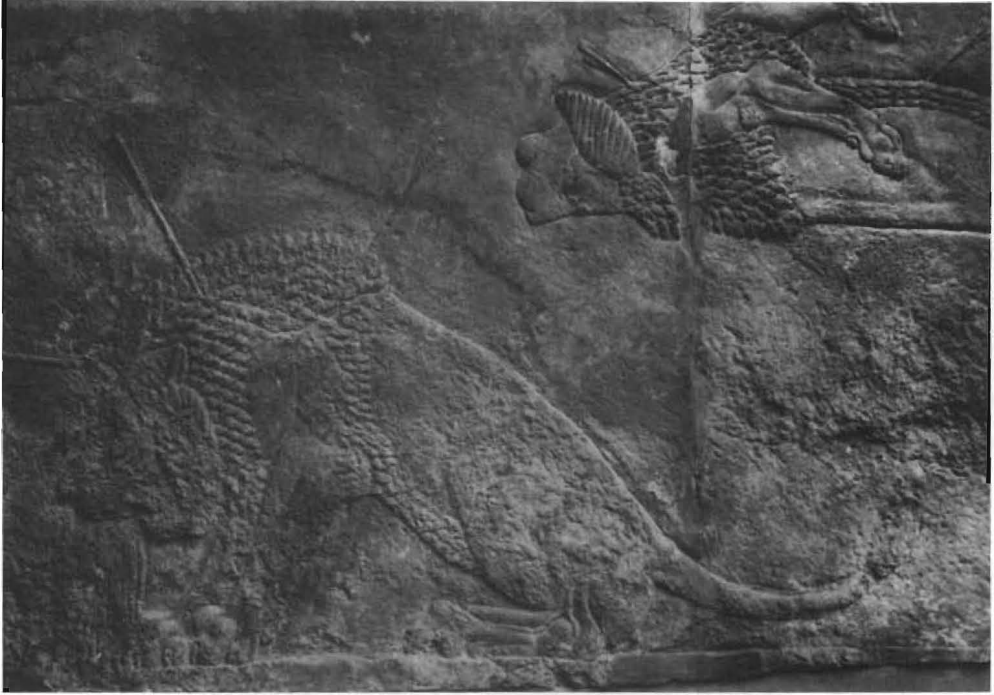


Fig. 12



Fig. 13



Fig. 14

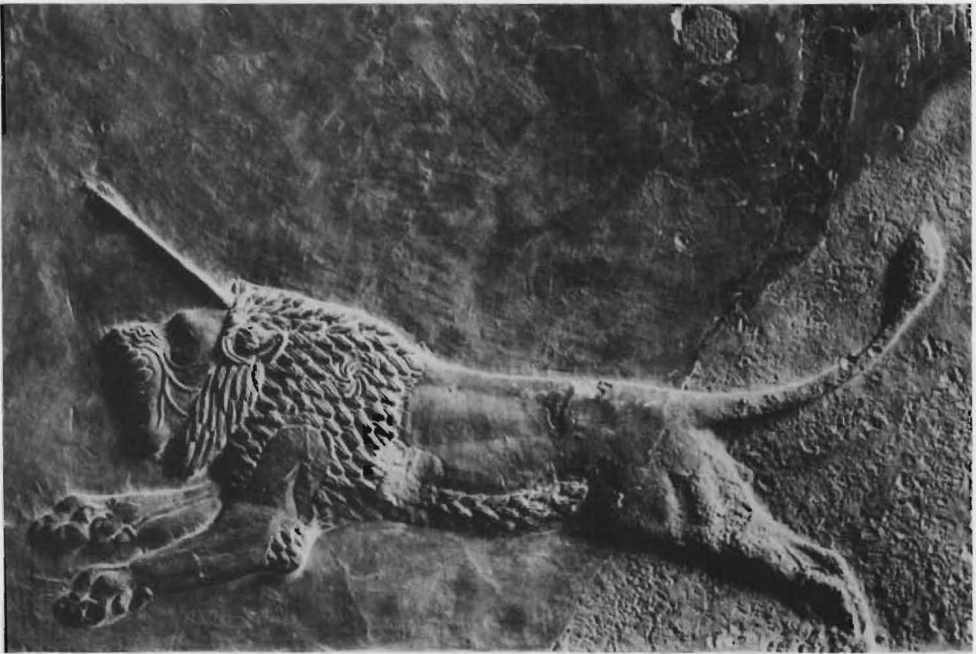


Fig. 15



Fig. 16

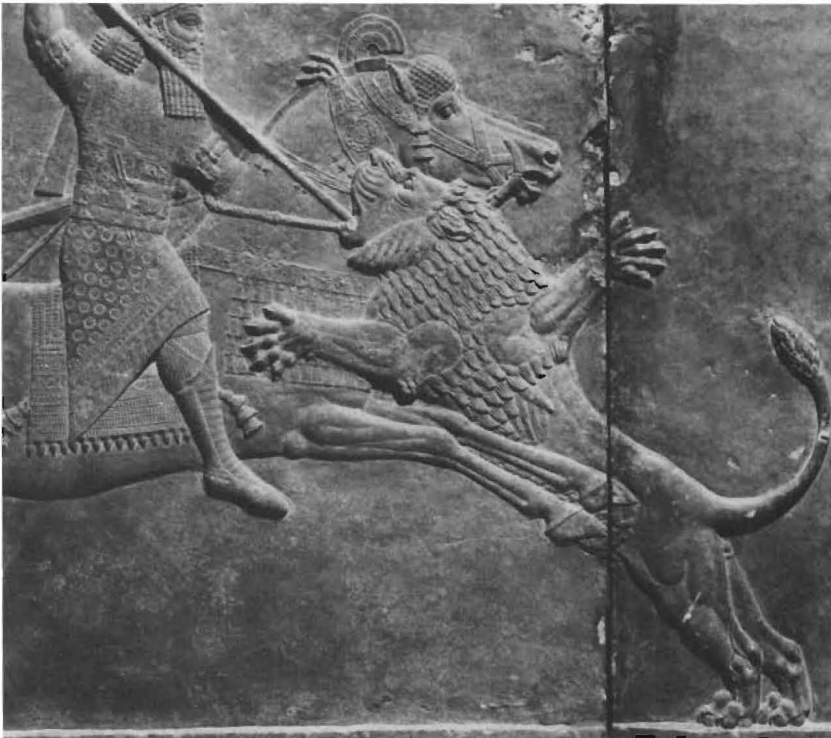


Fig. 17

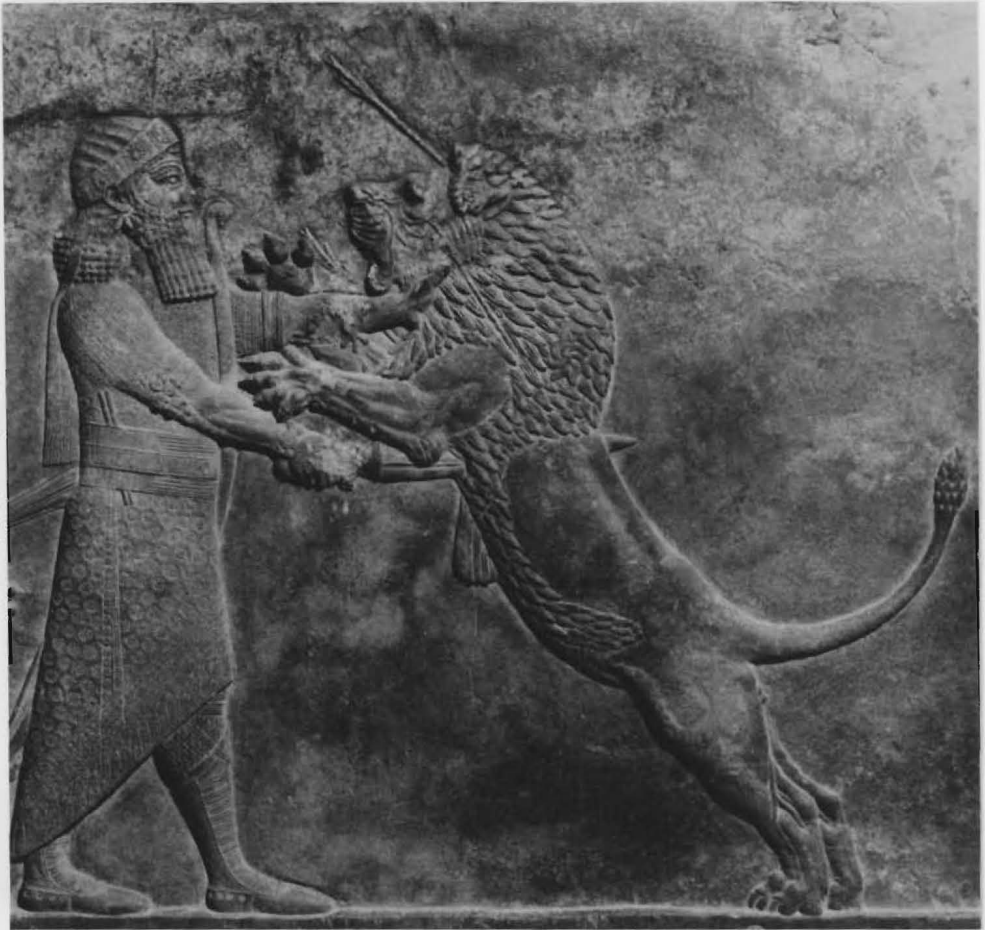


Fig. 18

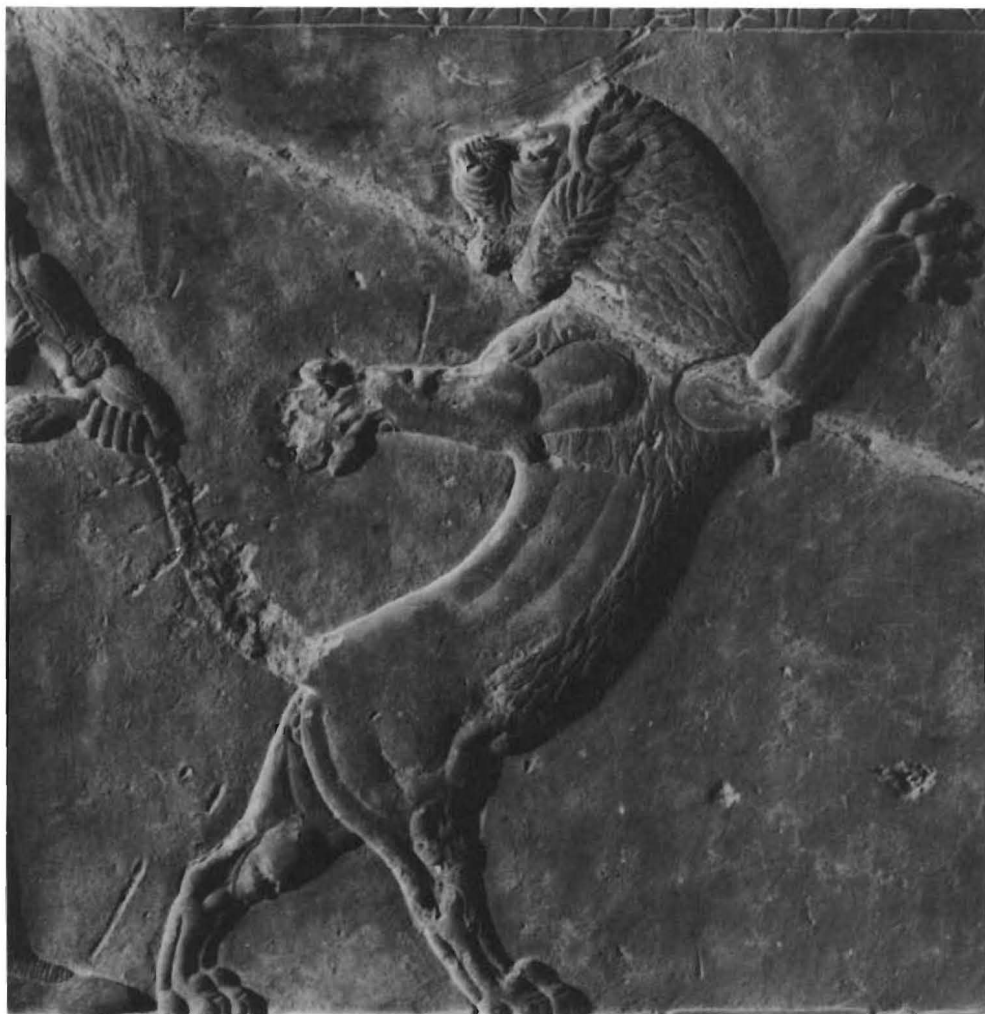


Fig. 19

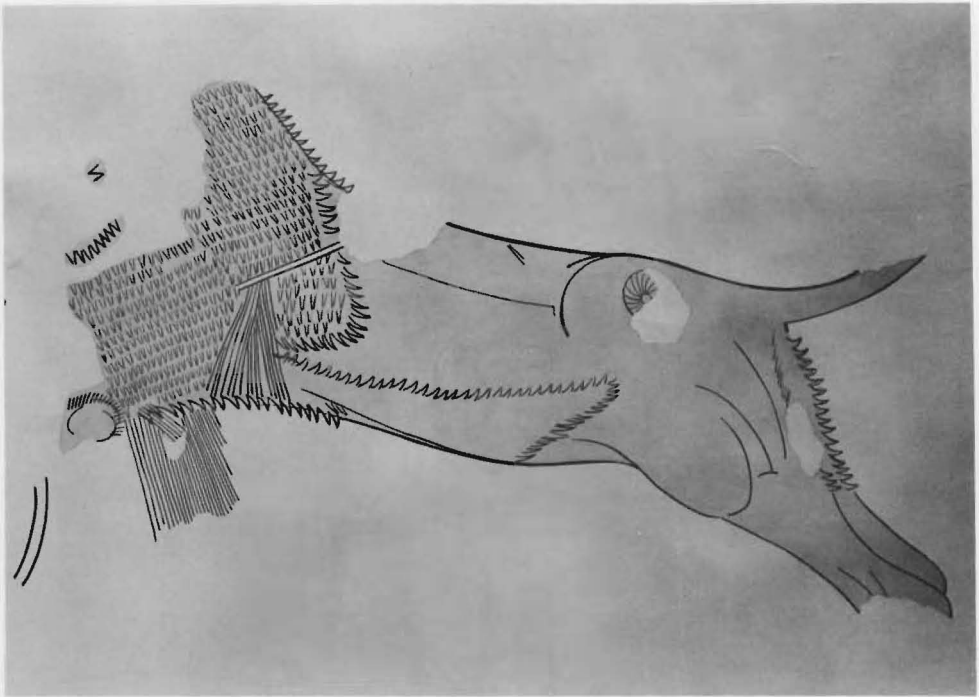


Fig. 20



Fig. 21

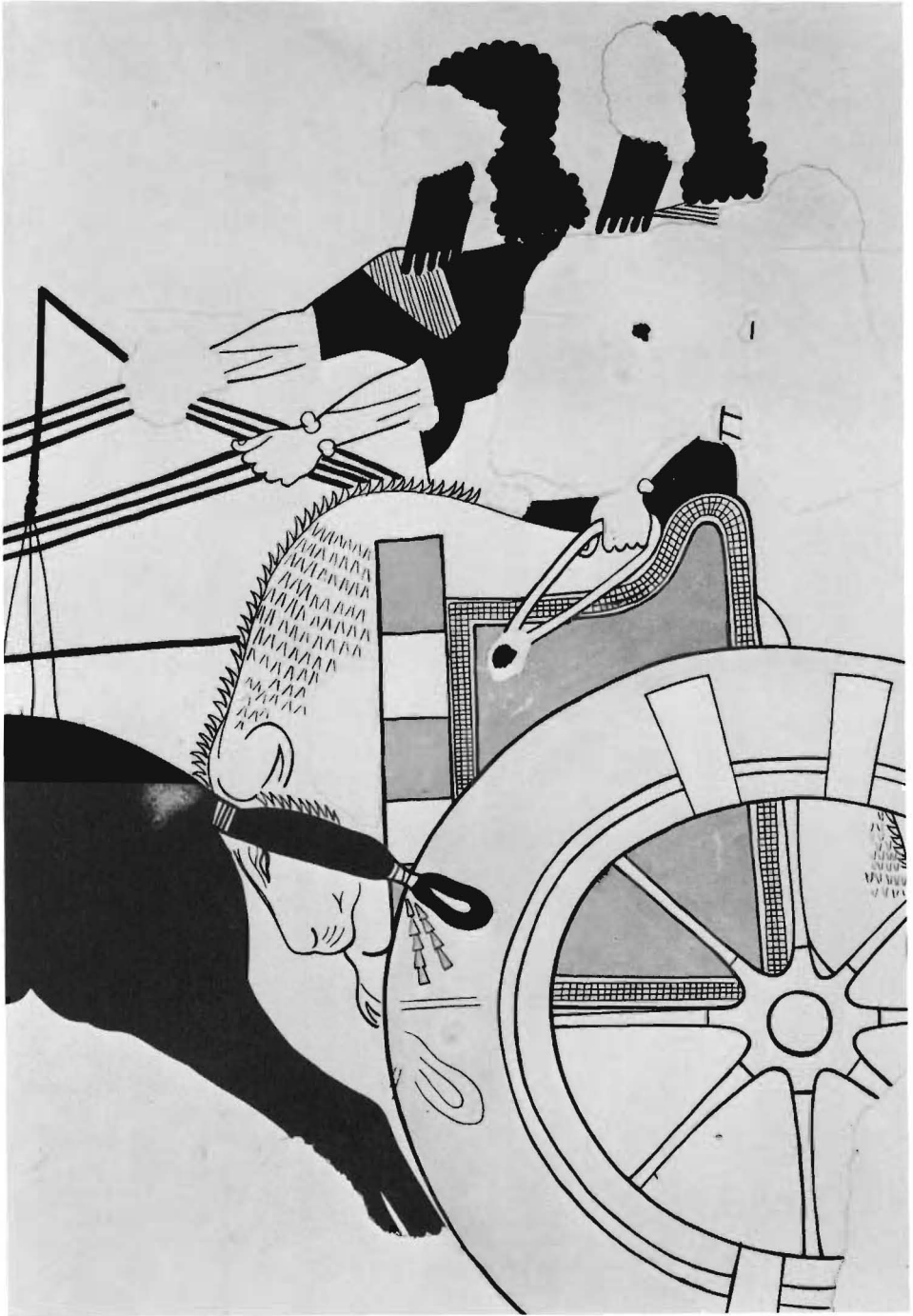


Fig. 22

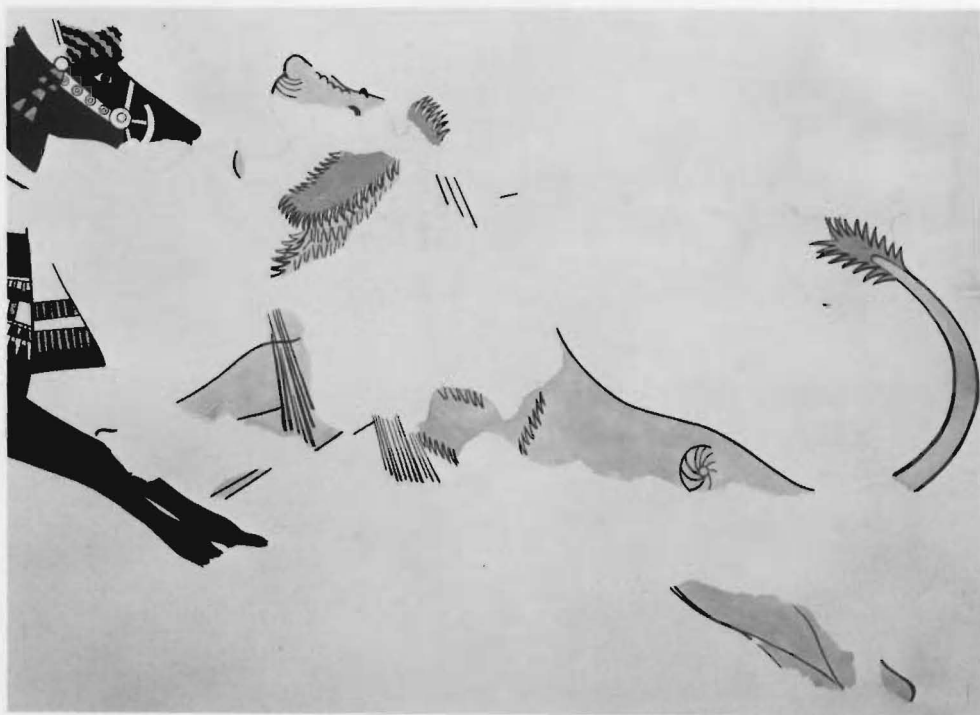


Fig. 23

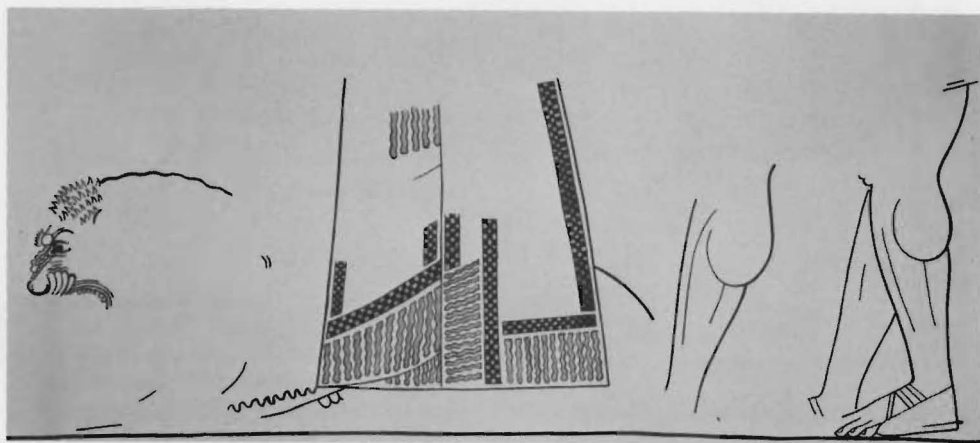


Fig. 24