



A Cult Stele from Arad

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IN the sixth season of excavation at the Early Bronze Age II city of Arad,¹ a stele was discovered (Pls. 14–15) on the floor of a large room. It lay upside-down near a well-built stone base for a wooden post. The room belongs to a large building, partly excavated in that season. Its function and significance remain to be clarified when the excavations of that particular section within Area T are completed. This new complex is situated south of the twin-temples complex uncovered in previous seasons, separated from it by an open space 5–7 m wide.² The location of this new complex in the central area of the bowl-shaped city supports our assumption that the public institutions of Arad were located there — a fact which should be considered evidence that the ruling authorities of the city exercised some sort of city planning.

The stele must have been executed locally, since it is made of chalk showing all the characteristics of that found in the vicinity. Some previously found art objects are also made of chalk: One cylinder-seal and two stamp-seals,³ and a bull statuette.⁴ These objects suggest the existence of a local 'school' of artists in the Early Bronze Age II city of Arad.

The shape of the roughly triangular stone has been achieved by light dressing only. Large chips have flaked off the back, both sides and the base, typical of this kind of chalk. The stele is *ca.* 24 cm high, 28 cm wide and 6.6–7.5 cm thick. The face shows more careful dressing. The centre is quite well-smoothed, sloping down towards the edges; the smoothed area is bordered at the bottom by a straight, slightly slanting line marking the base upon which the scene takes place. The base is *ca.* 2 mm higher than the smoothed area. The scene is incised, sometimes deeply and boldly, sometimes shallowly and carelessly. The method of expression is linear and abbreviated, and while not of high artistic standard, it does forcefully express a dramatic situation.

The scene shows two identical human, most probably male, figures, the larger one standing 'above' or 'behind' the smaller; the latter lies within a frame. Both their arms are raised and their disproportionally long fingers are widely spread. There are

¹ For a brief summary of results of the season see *IEJ* 21 (1971), pp. 228–9.

² The final report is with the printers. Cf. also Ruth Amiran: *The Beginnings of Urbanization in Canaan*, in J.A. Sanders (editor), *Near Eastern Archaeology in the Twentieth Century, Essays in Honor of Nelson Glueck*, New York, 1970, pp. 83 ff.

³ Cf. the chapter on the seals by Pirḥiya Beck, in the forthcoming final report.

⁴ The bull-statuettes were found in a room adjacent to the one where the stele was uncovered.



Fig. 1. Small jar from Bab edh-Dhra' (Scale 2:5).

three minor differences in the way the figures are depicted: the angle of the elbows differ slightly; there is space between the fingers of the standing figure, defining the palm of the hand, while those of the lying figure are extensions of his arms; the feet of the standing figure are shown clearly with ten toes, while those of the lying figure have not been incised, or only lightly so. The frame is lightly incised and its left end is hardly visible. On the right is a mistake which occurred in the delineation and was corrected by a second line. The most striking and important element of the whole scene is the fact that both figures have an ear of wheat instead of a human head.

Before turning to our suggested interpretation of this stele, we should like first to mention the 'picture pavement' in courtyard 4008 of the Early Bronze Age I (stratum XIX) twin temple (4047, 4050) at Megiddo. Drawings of human and animal figures, scratched and incised on the stones of this pavement, are rendered 'in the round' with full bodies; stone No. 5 shows a human figure with raised hands.⁵

Next we shall present some morphological analogies to our stele. (1) Small tomb steles from Abydos bear crudely made scenes or signs, either incised or in relief;⁶ their morphological similarity to our stele is only general. (2) Raised arms with outstretched fingers are shown prominently in the human figure incised on a jar (Pl. 16) from Tomb 1906 at Naqada, of the Gerzean (= Naqada II) period,⁷ R-Class,

⁵ G. Loud: *Megiddo*, II, Chicago, 1948, p. 61, Fig. 390, Pls. 271-282.

⁶ W.M.F. Petrie: *The Royal Tombs of the Earliest Dynasties*, I, London, 1900, Pls. xxxi-xxxv; II, London, 1901, Pls. xxvi-xxx.

⁷ W.M.F. Petrie and J.E. Quibell: *Naqada and Ballas*, London, 1896, Pl. xxxviii:R 81 and LI:1; Elise J. Baumgartel: *Petrie's Naqada Excavations, A Supplement*, London, 1970, Pl. LIII. The jar is with the Ashmolean Museum, No. 95.683, to whose authorities I am grateful for the present photographs and the permission to publish them here.



Fig. 2. Pre-Dynastic jar of the D-Class.

Type 81. While the fingers and hands are unmistakably similar to ours, the presentation of the head and body are rendered in an entirely different manner. (4) A small jar from Bab edh-Dhra' (Fig. 1) shows a decoration, made by burnishing on the red brownish slip, containing four human linear representations with raised hands.⁸ (5) A jar of the D-Class (Fig. 2) shows a group of human figures, two of whom have their hands raised and twigs (?) or ears of wheat (?) sprouting from their heads or stuck in their hair.⁹

In attempting an interpretation of the scene on the Arad stele, we may distinguish four steps in our thinking. In the first step the two identical figures are thought to represent one and the same being in two different positions.¹⁰ In the second step we may speculate that the standing figure represents the live being, while the lying one represents him as dead. Going one step further, the live, standing figure may be mourning the dead figure lying in his grave; the dead figure also has his arms raised in lamentation. The last step in this chain of thoughts identifies the figures in this stele as the god Dumuzi in one of his specific forms, Dumuzi-of-the-Grain, as indicated by the ear of wheat.¹¹ We are confronted here with an interesting mixture in the presentation of the deity, anthropomorphic in every respect but one — the very symbol which identifies him.

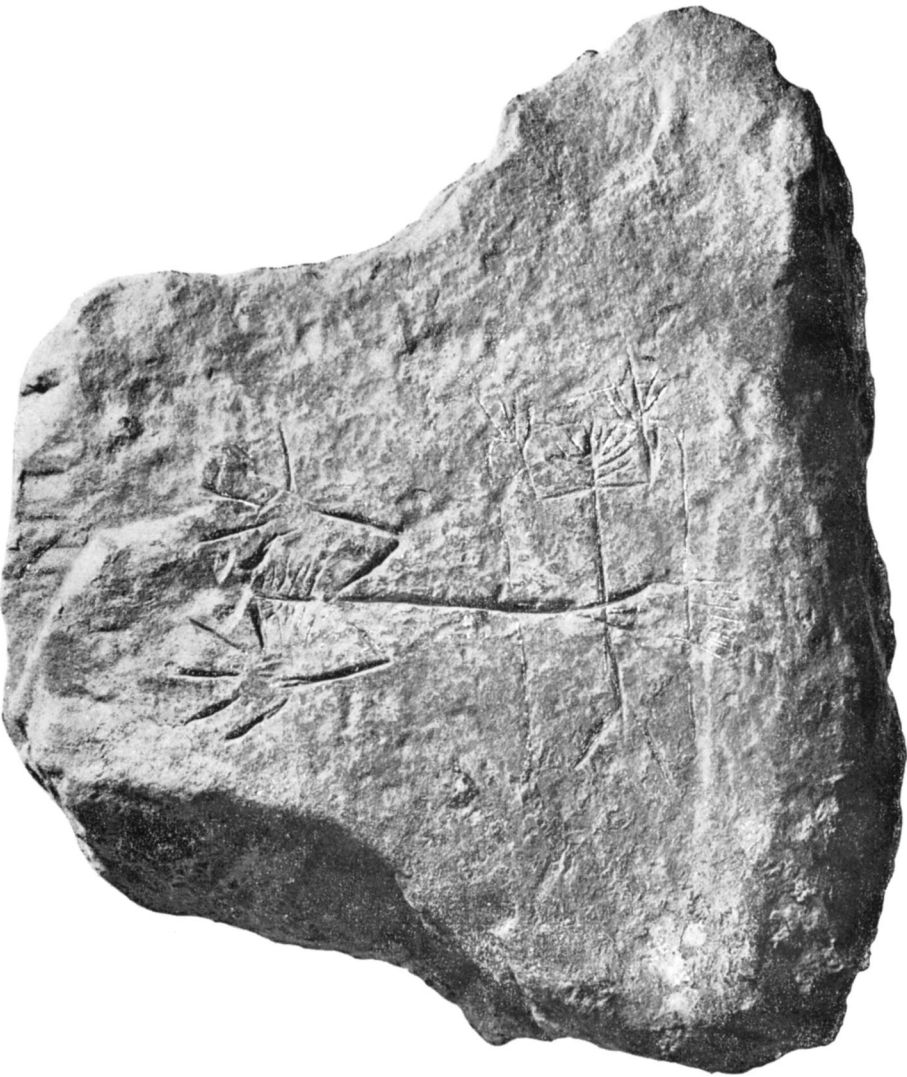
Surely there could be no deity more needed in the semi-arid area of Arad than a god representing vegetation and the cycle of the seasons.

⁸ S. Saller: Bab edh-Dhra', *Liber Annus* 15 (1964-65), pp. 116-9, Figs. 18:5 and 19. The decoration is burnished, not painted, as described in *ibid.* p. 166.

⁹ Elise J. Baumgartel: *The Cultures of Prehistoric Egypt* 1, London, 1955, p. 64, Fig. 14.

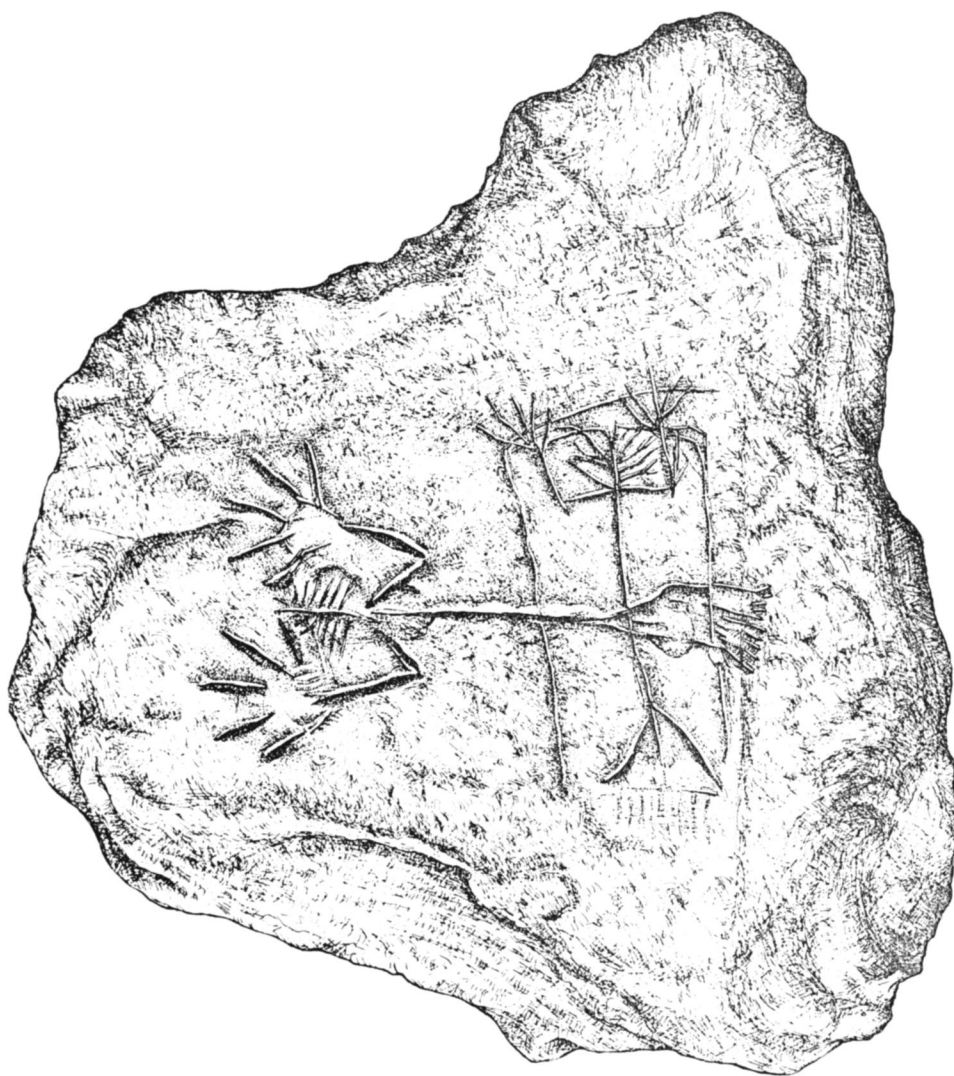
¹⁰ This interpretation would make remote the possibility that the scene is a *hieros gamos*.

¹¹ Th. Jacobsen: *Toward the Image of Tammuz, and Other Essays on Mesopotamian History and Culture*, Cambridge, 1970, pp. 73-103; S.N. Kramer: Dumuzi's Resurrection: An Important Correction to 'Inana's Descent', *BASOR* 183 (1966), p. 31.



Stele from Early Bronze Age II city of Arad (Scale 1 : 2).

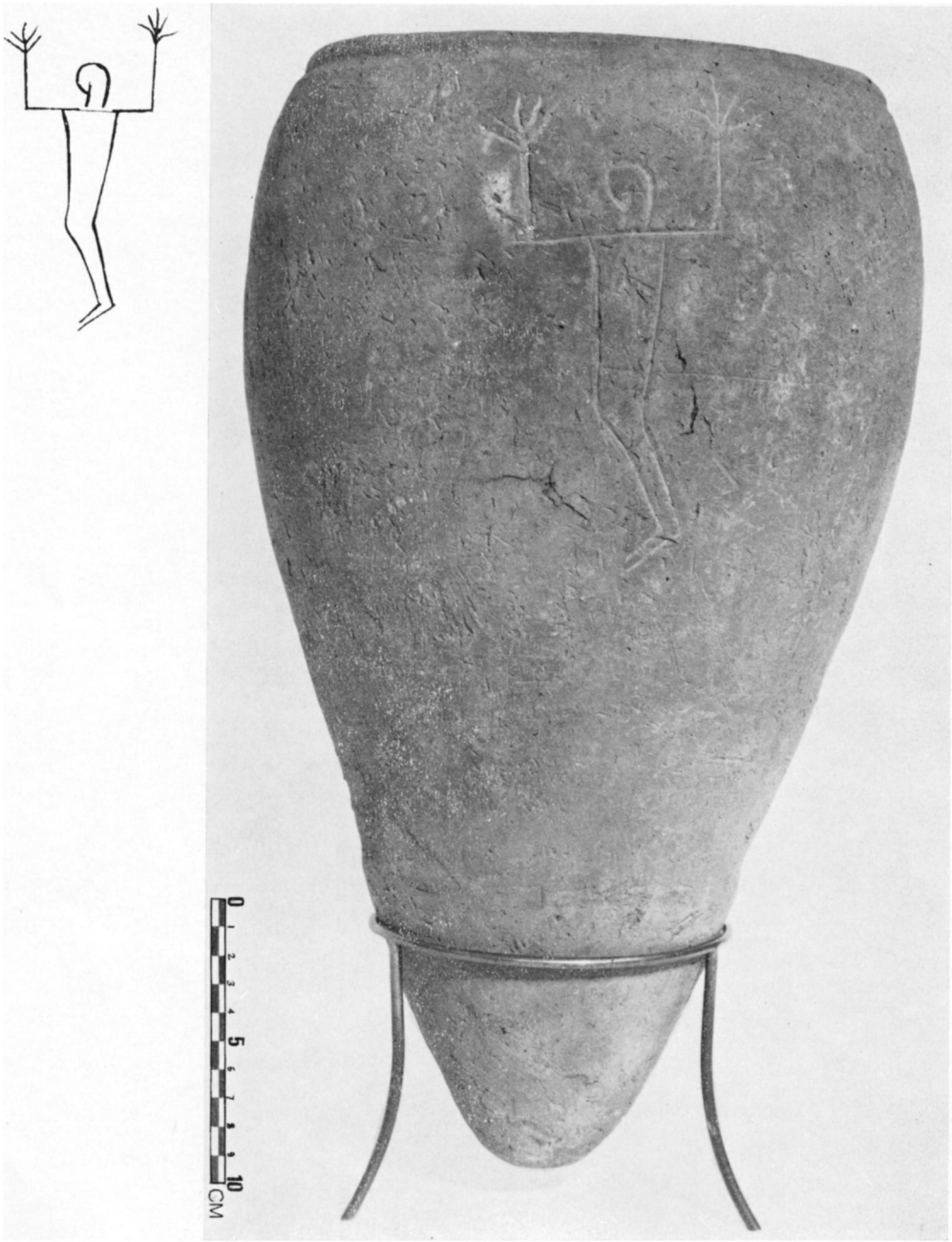
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Drawing of stele from Early Bronze Age II city of Arad (Scale 1 : 2).

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PLATE 16



Jar from Tomb 1906 at Naqada, Gerzean Period.

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