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Iron Age Deities in Word, Image, and Name: Correlating Epigraphic, Iconographic, and Onomastic Evidence for the Ammonite God*

For the study of Iron Age religion in Jordan, personal names offer an important source of information, especially given the scarcity of other forms of textual evidence (Bartlett 1989: 187-228; Mattingly 1989; Israel 1990; Aufrecht 1999a). Among the onomastica of the Iron Age southern Levant, the Ammonite names pose an intriguing dilemma. While inscriptions and biblical texts indicate that the chief Ammonite god was Milkom (e.g., 1 Kgs 11:5, 33; 2 Kgs 23:13), the overwhelming majority of Ammonite theophoric personal names instead feature the divine element) *'l* (Aufrecht 1999b: 156-59). Based on this fact, some scholars have concluded that the Ammonites' leading deity was not Milkom but El (Daviau and Dion 1994; Aufrecht 1999b: 159-60; though cf. Aufrecht 2003: 139, note 3). Others discount the personal name evidence as uncertain and look to the other textual sources mentioning Milkom (Hübner 1992: 256). Still others have suggested that El and Milkom, or their aspects, have been combined in some fashion (Tigay 1986: 19-20 and note 60; Lemaire 1994).

Any further advance in the discussion of the Ammonite dilemma will require accounting for a few basic aspects of West Semitic theophoric personal names as religious evidence. As scholarship has affirmed and reaffirmed, personal names typically do not reference the specific cult, myth, or theology of a particular god or goddess but rather convey fairly generic expressions of trust, hope, thanksgiving, and praise that could apply to various deities (Caquot 1962: 256; Tigay 1986: 5-7; cf. Fowler 1988; cf. further Barr 1990; Roberts 1990). Moreover, as religious evidence, anthroponyms belong primarily to the realm of family or personal religion (Albertz 1978), and yet they also reflect broader social and political dynamics (Tigay 1986; Albertz 1978: 49-76; Callaway 1999). What is more, while personal names seem to offer the most obvious information as an indication of deities worshiped by a population, this correlation is a complex one and so names need to be studied in relationship to other kinds of religious evidence (Pardee 1988: 119-122; Smith 2002: 4-5).

In keeping with these aspects of onomastic religious evidence, there is a need for further discussion that incorporates all relevant evidence categories for identifying any leading god of the Ammonites. Unto that end, the following discussion brings the onomastic evidence into relationship with other epigraphic and iconographic evidence from Jordan. The remarks that follow are offered as one effort toward correlating the various categories of available onomastic, epigraphic, and iconographic evidence bearing on the question, and refining the analysis pertaining to it. As the discussion will show, viewing the various evidence categories together in this way gives new support for understanding onomastic) *'l* and epigraphic Milkom as referring to the same Ammonite god.

1. Ammonite Statuary: The Persona of the Royal God

Surviving artistic evidence from ancient Ammon is marked by a relative abundance of statuary and sculpture in the round (Dornemann 1983: 153-

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163). The Ammonite statuary includes a series of items that have figured into scholarly discussions of the identity of the Ammonite god, namely, depictions of a figure wearing a form of the Egyptian *'atef* crown (Abou Assaf 1980: 34-36, 57-58, 77-79; Younker 1994: 308-310; LaBianca and Younker 1995: 410). That evidence includes a number of stone statues and statue heads recovered from ʻAmmān and its environs (Abou Assaf 1980: 21-24, 70-71 and Tafeln I-V; Dornemann 1983: 156-157; ʻAmr 1990; Dabrowski 1997), along with two similarly-styled heads from clay figurines—one, a clay figurine with painted beard and moustache from the Amman Citadel (described in Zayadine *et al*. 1989: 362) and the other, a plaque figurine discovered at Tall Jāwā (Daviau and Dion 1994).[1]

Whether these statue heads represent a human or divine figure has been a matter of scholarly debate. In his study of Ammonite statuary, A. Abou Assaf compares the stone heads with the *yrḥ*ʻ*zr* statue (*CAI* 43), which was discovered in the same find as one of the *'atef*-crowned statues (Barnett 1951: 34-35 and Plates X-XI; About Assaf 1980: 25-27, 78 and Tafel IX). As Abou Assaf suggests, the use of the less elaborate headband in the *yrḥ*ʻ*zr* statue to depict a prominent human subject, most likely the Ammonite king (see, e.g., Zayadine 1974: 135-36), may indicate that by comparison the full crown denotes a figure of yet higher status, that is, a deity (Abou Assaf 1980: 78). On the other hand, the similar posture, dress, and bare feet in both the *yrḥ*ʻ*zr* statue and the two complete *'atef*-crowned statues might suggest that the latter also depict the human king (see Barnett 1951: 34; Horn 1973: 179-80).[2] Accordingly, based on these aspects of the Ammonite statuary alone, one might think in terms of two different modes of artistic representation of the human king—a more austere image of royal dignity in the *'atef*-crowned figures and a more approachable royal persona in the *yrḥ*ʻ*zr* statue. A brilliant suggestion by Zayadine is that the *'atef* crown is reserved for a deceased, deified king and that the *yrḥ*ʻ*zr* statue represents the living, mortal king (Zayadine 1991: 50). Intriguing as this suggestion may be, more evidence would be needed to show that the Ammonites believed in the deification of their deceased kings.

In determining the status of the figures depicted in the Ammonite statuary, the factor privileging the greatest amount of evidence is the broader significance of the Egyptian *'atef* crown. While the *'atef* crown is sometimes included in portrayals of other Egyptian deities, it is associated primarily with Osiris (*ANEP*, No. 573; Horn 1973: 174 and notes 16- 18; Daviau and Dion 1994: 160). As an elaboration on the white crown of Upper Egypt, the *'atef* crown is distinguished by the two ostrich feathers flanking the crown at the sides—in effect, a doubling of the curled feather of Maat, against which the heart of the deceased is weighed before Osiris in the otherworldly judgment described in "the Book of Going Forth By Day" (i.e., the Book of the Dead) and in accompanying pictorial scenes, sometimes along with the depiction of "two Maats" looking on in the final judgment scene (see Gardiner 1957: 504; Helck 1980: especially 1112; Wyatt 1983: 276 note 21; Faulkner and Andrews 1985: 27-35). In short, the *'atef* crown is emblematic of Osiris' role as otherworldly judge and king over the realm of the dead. Accordingly, in Egyptian myth and art Osiris stands as the ultimate ruler of human destiny and personifies the ideal of timeless royalty beyond the corruptibility of earthly existence (see, e.g., Griffiths 2001). Osiris' persona and symbolism as a royal god are thus fitting for the depiction of prominent deities within the realm of ancient Egypt's political and cultural influence.

Accordingly, the *'atef* crown appears in various artistic depictions of West Semitic deities associated with divine or human kingship in Syria-Palestine during the Late Bronze and Iron Ages (Horn 1973: 173-75; Abou Assaf 1980: 77-79; Daviau and Dion 1994: 160-61). From Late Bronze Ugarit, reliefs and bronze sculpture show an enthroned god, usually understood to be the senior head of the pantheon El, wearing the *'atef* crown (Schaeffer 1966: 7-8, Fig. 3 and Pl. II; Wyatt 1983). The goddess Anat, who is identified at Ugarit as "the mistress of kingship, the mistress of dominion, the mistress of the high heavens" (*bʻlt mlk bʻlt drkt bʻlt šmm rmm*

[1] Two male clay figurine heads from Tall al-ʻUmayrī include a headdress with ridges similar to those of the Tall Jāwā head, but these lack the side feathers of the *'atef* crown (see below) and, as Dabrowski suggests, probably belonged to rider-on-horse figures (see Dabrowski 1997: 343-348 and figs. 18.14-18.18).

[2] Horn's interpretation of the *'atef*-crowned Ammonite statues as depicting the crown of the human king in connection with 2 Sam 12:30 and 1 Chr 20:2, though acknowledging the *'atef*-crown's widespread role in the depiction of non-Egyptian goddesses and gods, does not adequately account for its meaning as a divine symbol across that range of comparative artistic evidence (see the discussion below; Horn 1973; see Abou Assaf 1980: 76).

KTU 1.108 6-7), appears enthroned and wearing the *'atef* crown in stelae and sculpture from Egypt and Palestine (*ANEP*, no. 473; Rowe 1930: 33 Pl. 50a; Montet 1933: Pl. LIV). Another Asiatic goddess depicted with the Osirian crown in Egyptian art is Astarte, often on horseback with a weapon in one hand raised in a "smiting" position (Rowe 1930: 21, Pl. 48:2; Leclant 1960: 24-25, 30-33, Figures 10-11, Pl. I:A, B). Other Egyptian depictions of a "smiting" goddess, perhaps Anat or Astarte, feature the *'atef* crown (Leclant 1960: 13-14, 52, Figures 2 and 28). In Transjordan, the Baluah Stele relief, also in Egyptian style, depicts a god, a human king, and a goddess, the latter of which—in keeping with the apparent royal emphasis of the scene—wears the *'atef* crown (Ward and Martin 1964: 14, 16 and Pls. I, III, and IV).

As an extension of its primary association with Osiris, the *'atef* crown's meaning as a divine attribute thus indicates that in the Ammonite statuary it likewise depicts a deity, more specifically, a deity who represents royalty among the gods and perhaps the human monarchy as well. In short, the god thus depicted stands in the role of the Ammonite royal god. The question remains, which Ammonite god served in this role?

The most substantial case for the deity El as the chief Ammonite god depicted in the Ammonite statuary has been made by P. M. M. Daviau and P. E. Dion (1994). In making the case for El, they draw on two categories of evidence: comparative iconography and personal names.

As Daviau and Dion make clear, important parallels for the Ammonite crowned figures come from Late Bronze Ugarit, specifically the depictions of an enthroned god, presumably El, in a stele relief and in bronze figurines (see above; Daviau and Dion 1994: 161, 164). It bears reminding, though, that the recognition of that Ugaritic deity as El is not made by the artifacts themselves, which are uninscribed, but rather involves an inference informed by various Ugaritic texts describing El's role as "king" (*mlk*) and patriarch of the pantheon, which is his royal family and the royal assembly over which he exercised authority (see Smith 2001: 135-137; Wyatt 1983; W. Herrmann 1999: 275; Cornelius 1999: 587-93). Different mythological frameworks distinguish Ugaritic El's role as king and progenitor of the gods from Osiris' role as deceased king and father of Horus, the living god who represents the living king (see Griffiths 2001). Nonetheless, the ability to connect Osiris' royal iconography in the form of the *'atef* crown at Ras Shamra with the deity El ultimately rests on what written texts reveal about El's status as the divine embodiment of royalty at Late Bronze Age Ugarit.

By analogy, the appearance of similar imagery in local depictions of the divine at Iron Age Ammon indicates the deity to be neither Osiris nor necessarily El but rather the head of the Ammonite pantheon in a similar role, whoever that deity might be. Just as the *'atef* crown appears in the depiction of other non-Egyptian deities of Syria-Palestine, so it appears for the leading deity of the Ammonites. That is, in the Ugaritic and later Ammonite artistic evidence alike, the imagery of Osiris represents not the identity of a specific deity but the role by which that deity is known, a god who personifies kingship—in short, the royal god.

In keeping with the broader emulation of Egyptian artistic style in Late Bronze and Iron Age Syria-Palestine, the *'atef* crown belongs to an international prestige language in iconography that is employed in the depiction of royalty among the divine. One may with Daviau and Dion affirm that the evidence from sculpture is compatible with the hypothesis of El's place as the main god at Ammon, but it would be equally compatible with whatever deity, including Milkom, might have occupied that role. At the end of the day, determining which specific Ammonite god filled the iconographically depicted role of divine sovereign rests on the available written evidence.

On the basis of biblical and inscriptional references (see above), Abou Assaf has suggested that deity to be Milkom (1980: 77-79). Dismissing that evidence as too meager, Daviau and Dion turn to the personal names, which as noted overwhelmingly favor the theophoric element *'l* (1994: 164). Daviau and Dion understand that divine element as being in reference to the deity El as opposed to the common noun "god," an assumption that is problematic without further support (see Layton 1996: 610; Lemaire 1994: 143). It is ultimately on the basis of the ambiguous onomastic evidence that Daviau and Dion's case for El as the Ammonites' leading god ultimately rests. Thus further precision in treating the onomastic evidence would enable a more fruitful utilization of the incisive comparative-iconographic analysis that Daviau and Dion offer.

At the same time, Daviau and Dion's analysis

leads to an important insight based on the Ammonite statuary, one that stands to inform further consideration of the theophoric personal names. The comparisons with Ugaritic artistic tradition show the religious ideal of the royal deity to be one later shared and celebrated among the Iron Age Ammonites. Both Ugaritic and Ammonite traditions depict a royal god, and in so doing represent a broader and longstanding Syro-Palestinian inclination toward Egyptian emulation. Thus the imagery and symbolism associated with Osiris were well suited for the visual representation of the role of divine sovereign at Iron Age Ammon as at Bronze Age Ugarit. That is, the motif of divine royalty in the Ammonite statuary reflects the acknowledged status of one deity above others as an ideal given visible expression in Ammonite religion. In view of this insight from the artistic evidence, one might now give further consideration to the Ammonite personal names.

2. The Onomastic Evidence: The National Deity as the Family Deity

In seeking to identify the leading god of the Ammonites as depicted in their statuary, one might consider the identification of Milkom in this role in the Hebrew Bible (see above). As regularly noted, Milkom appears in personal names only infrequently, to date in only five names: *bdmlkm* (*CAI* 1b), *mlkm 'wr* (*CAI* 129), *mlkmgd* (*CAI* 127), *mlkm'z* (*CAI* 136), *mlkmyt* (*CAI* 147:1:1; see Aufrecht 1999b: 157 n. 26).[3] Slightly more frequent are *b'l* and *'dn*, which like *'l* might be understood as a common noun or title for a deity and not a proper divine name as such (Aufrecht 1999b: 156-60 and notes 19, 29). Though other divine names and titles appear in the Ammonite onomasticon (e.g., *gd*, *nr, yrḥ*, etc.), none occurs with any frequency. As others have observed, the Ammonite onomasticon thus does not reflect a great variety of deities, and the divine element *'l* dominates (see Tigay 1986: 19-20 and notes 60 and 61; Lemaire 1994: 142-43; Aufrecht 1999b: 156-59; cf. Israel 1990: 316-35).

The ambiguity of *'l* as a divine element in West Semitic personal names leads S. C. Layton to an apt and frequently cited suggestion: "In the absence of hard evidence, the interpretation of *'el* as a common noun 'god' is preferred" (Layton 1996: 610). Such evidence to the contrary might be sought through a close comparison of leading theophoric elements in the onomastica of Ammon's close neighbors in the southern Levant.

Among the Hebrew theophoric names in Iron Age inscriptions, as collected by J. Tigay, 83.3% refer to the Israelite god Yahweh (see TABLE 1 and Tigay 1986: 9-17, 47-85).[4] If only names in inscriptions from controlled archeological excavations are counted, the percentage of Yahweh names remains nearly identical (81%; see TABLE 2).[5] Though not sufficiently abundant either to be equally representative or to allow for the same statistical precision, the names from published Moabite and Edomite sources nonetheless indicate a similar frequency for Kemosh and Qos, respectively.[6] The comparable frequency of the most popular divine name elements among the Hebrew, Moabite, and Edomite names is matched among the relatively abundant Ammonite names, in which *'l* occurs in roughly 84% of the theophoric names, whether including or

[3] The last two names mentioned come from inscriptions that have been dated to ca. 500 (*CAI* 136) and the fifth century BC (*CAI* 147) and thus are not included in the statistics of Iron Age epigraphic personal names discussed below (see Aufrecht 1989: 136, 341).

[4] This count includes the Hebrew names with *'l* as the theophoric el ement, which Tigay lists in his Appendix D (Pp. 83-85) but which, in keeping with the aims of his study, Tigay excludes from the body of his discussion (see Pp. 9-17).

[5] As noted by Tigay (1986: 12 note 34). For extensive and incisive discussion of the problem of possible forgeries among non-provenanced finds, see Rollston 2003, 2004.

[6] The Edomite names are found in Bartlett 1989: 204–27 and in Avigad and Sass 1997: 387–94. The Moabite names are found in the Mesha inscription (*KAI* 181:1; *COS* 2:137), the Karak Fragment (Reed and Winnett 1963), Sennacherib's Annals (Luckenbill 1924: 30; *COS* 2: 303), and others listed in Mattingly 1989: 222 and in Avigad and Sass 1997: 372-386.
In keeping with Tigay's method for counting the Hebrew names, the Edomite, Moabite, and Ammonite names discussed here are tabulated in similar fashion. That is, the totals reflect the number of individuals understood to bear a given name. Multiple attestations of the same name in different sources are counted as different individuals, unless obviously referring to the same person; e.g., Edomite Qaus-gabri, mentioned in two different Assyrian inscriptions and in a seal from (Umm al-Biyāra (see Bartlett 1989: 204; Tigay 1986: 43-44). In contrast to the Hebrew names, which Tigay takes only from Hebrew inscriptions, those of the other language groups counted here are represented by comparatively small epigraphic corpera, and so Ammonite, Moabite, and Edomite names from contemporary Assyrian sources are included here. For all three groups and in keeping with Tigay's method, only names dated to the mid-sixth century or earlier are included.
As Tigay found with the Hebrew names, among the Ammonite anthroponyms, which are relatively well represented, the ratio of names invoking the most popular deities does not differ significantly when one excludes examples lacking an archaeological provenance (see Tigay 1986: 9-17, 47-85). The Ammonite names are taken from Aufrecht 1989; Aufrecht 1999b: 152-62; Aufrecht 1999a: 177–81.

excluding those from inscriptions derived from the antiquities market (compare TABLES 1 and 2).

Given the overall linguistic, cultural, and geographic affinities among these population groups, this striking pattern in onomastic theophoric elements suggests that in the Ammonite personal names *ʾl* has a significance corresponding to that of Qos, Kemosh, or onomastic forms of Yahweh in each of the other name groups. That is, the parallels suggest that in the Ammonite names *ʾl* typically occurs not as a common noun but as the title of the chief Ammonite deity, if not the divine name El.[7]

As noted, personal names are an expression of family religion, and the names reflect the significance of those deities in that context. The most frequently named deities in Edomite, Moabite, and Hebrew theophoric names are also the acknowledged national gods of each population.[8] Among the peoples of the southern Levant represented by these names, one might thus recognize an interrelationship between national religious identity and the family-based activity of name-giving. The correlation between the most popular divine name element in anthroponyms and the chief deity of national religion indicates a similar status for Ammonite *ʾl*.

One key area of onomastic evidence that illustrates the overlapping of family piety and national religion is that of royal names. Among the names of known Moabite kings, the national deity Kemosh is mentioned in the royal names *kmšyt* (*KAI* 181:1; *COS* 2:137; Reed and Winnett 1963) and *kemōšnadbi* (Kammusunadbi in Sennacherib's annals, see Luckenbill 1924: 30; *COS* 2:303). The Edomite kings included Qausmalaka (Tiglath-Pileser III, *ANET*, 282) and Qausgabri (Esarhaddon, Prism B, V.56, *ANET*, 291; Ashurbanipal, Prism C II.28, *ANET*, 294). Among the kings of Israel and Judah named in the Hebrew Bible, the overwhelming majority of theophoric names are Yahwistic, and, with the possible exception of kinship elements like *ʿam* in names such as Rehoboam and Jeroboam, no king rules by a name mention-

TABLE 1. Deities Invoked in Theophoric Names in Iron Age Inscriptions Including Unprovenanced Finds.

Language (number of theophoric names)	Most frequent divine element	Frequency of other divine elements including *ʾl*; for Ammonite, including *mlkm*)
Hebrew (669)	83.3% (557) *yh(w)/yw*	16.7% (112)
Ammonite (195)	84.1% (164) *ʾl*	15.9% (31)
Moabite (18)	83.3% (15) *kmš*	16.7% (3)
Edomite (15)	66.7% (10) *qws*	33.3% (5)

TABLE 2. Deities Invoked in Theophoric Names in Iron Age Inscriptions from Controlled Archaeological Excavations.

Language (number of theophoric names)	Most frequent divine element	Frequency of other divine elements including *ʾl*; for Ammonite, including *mlkm*)
Hebrew (263)	81% (213) *yh(w)/yw*	19 % (50)
Ammonite (45)	84.4% (38) *ʾl*	15.6% (7)
Moabite (5)	60 % (3) *kmš*	40% (2)
Edomite (12)	83.3% (10) *qws*	16.7% (2)

[7] In the Hebrew Bible, *ʾēl* rarely if ever appears as a deity clearly distinguished from Israel's god (cf., e.g., Ezek 28:2) and thus, in addition to its occasional occurrence as a common noun (e.g., Deut 32:12; Mal 2:11; Ps 81:10 [9]; etc.), regularly functions as a title for Yahweh (e.g., Gen 17:1; 33:20; 46:3; Exod 20:5; Isa 9:5 [6]; etc.; see Cross 1974: 253-61; Herrmann 1999; Smith 2002: 32-43, 200-207).

[8] For the Edomites, the lack of other textual evidence means that the personal names are also the main evidence for the national deity. Significantly enough, though, no other deities besides Qos appear with any frequency among the Edomite names.

ing a deity other than Yahweh.[9] Among the known Ammonite names, one royal official is attested with a Milkom name (i.e., *mlkm'wr 'bd b'lyš* in a seal from Tall al-'Umayrī [*CAI* 129; Geraty 1985: 98-100, plates 7 and 8; Herr 1989]), but as yet no names of known kings refer to Milkom, the only repeated theophoric name element being *'l*, (in *pd'l* [*CAI* 13] and *ḥṣl'l* [*CAI* 78:2]; see Cross 1985), this in keeping with the broader picture in Ammonite names.

In sum, the onomastic evidence suggests the dominance of a single deity in national and family religious life for Ammonites during Iron II. Whether a true divine name or a title for the main deity who also went by other designations, *'l* designates a god who fills the role of leading deity among the population, like Moabite Kemosh, Edomite Qos, and Hebrew Yahweh in the names of Ammon's closest Iron Age neighbors. Not only was the god designated in the names as *'l* the most popular Ammonite deity, but this deity knew no real rivals—*mlkm* being the only other divine name element that occurs with any significance and *b 'l* and *'dn* possibly being divine titles or appellatives. Thus following the pattern of theophoric names for Iron Age peoples of the southern Levant, the Ammonite onomasticon provides further evidence for the concept reflected in the Ammonite statuary, that of a leading national deity. With the aim of incorporating all the evidence relevant to that god's identity, one might now turn to other inscriptions.

3. Non-Onomastic Inscriptions: National and International Deities

Among the few non-onomastic inscriptions relating to the identity of the Ammonite god, the key text is the 'Amman Citadel Inscription, dating to the ninth century BC (*CAI* 59; *COS* 2:139). The loss of text on both edges of the limestone plaque bearing the inscription hinders a full understanding and has made possible a variety of interpretations of its focus and function (see Aufrecht 1989: 155-157, along with the comprehensive bibliography provided there and in *COS* 2:139). Nevertheless, there is general scholarly agreement that Milkom's name occurs at the beginning of the extant text, and in connection with "building" and with potential threats surrounding the ancient capital, Rabbat Ammon—matters that fall under the prerogatives and responsibilities of kings (Shea 1979, 1991; Hübner 1992: 254; Aufrecht in *COS* 2:139, note 3). The implication of this rare Ammonite monumental inscription is that from relatively early on, the main deity recognized in connection with the Ammonite monarchy was Milkom.

A seventh-century seal refers to its owner, *mng 'nrt* (Akkadian *Mannu-kī-Inurta*) by the epithet "blessed of Milkom" (*brk lmlkm* CAI 55; Avigad 1965).[10] The appearance of such an epithet on a stamp seal suggests Milkom's relevance to both personal and public spheres of life. The signaled importance of identifying personally with Milkom is underscored by the fact that the seal owner has an Assyrian name—what is more, one mentioning a foreign deity, namely, "(N)inurta." Whether an individual of Mesopotamian origin or a native Ammonite who had received the name while living abroad or in the service of the Assyrian empire (see Hübner 1992: 88; Avigad and Sass 1997: 301- 302), the seal owner deemed it appropriate, advantageous, or sufficiently worthwhile to signal in print his identification with the Ammonite god Milkom.[11]

Scarce though the surviving Ammonite epigraphic evidence may be, inscriptions are better weighed than counted as religious evidence. That which is preserved, though sparse, attests to Milkom's prominence in public and political life during the time of the Ammonite monarchy. The non-onomastic epigraphic sources from ancient Ammon thus correspond to the usual acknowledgement of Milkom as "the god of the Ammonites" in the biblical books of Kings and in the prophetic books (1 Kgs 11:5, 23; 2 Kgs 23:13; Am 1:15; Jer 49[=30]:1, 3; Zeph 1:5; cf. Judg 11:24; 1 Kgs 11:7)[12]. The etymological associations of Milkom

[9] For a convenient list, see the Coogan 2001: 531 in the ESSAYS section of the volume. For the understanding of kinship elements in anthroponyms as being in reference to deities, see Gray 1896: 254–55; Noth 1928: 66–75. According to J. J. Stamm, they invoke deceased human ancestors (Stamm 1968: 278–87). K. van der Toorn has argued that the kinship elements refer to divinized deceased human ancestors (van der Toorn 1996).

[10] The fact that this seal is of unknown provenance calls for caution in allowing too much to rest on this one object and the inscription it bears (for extensive bibliography and discussion of the seal, see Aufrecht 1989: 141-144).

[11] Alternatively, N. Na'aman and R. Zadok suggest reading the phrase as a patronymic in Aramaic, thus *br* ("son of") *klmlkm* (Na'aman and Zadok 1988: 45-46 note 51). The supporting explanation of *klmlkm* as a *mlkm*-name formed with the Akkadian element *kulu'u*"actor, member of the temple-personnel (of Iš]tar), performing dances and music" (*CAD* K, 529a), is less than convincing.

[12] In addition to these clear references from the MT, more debated references occur in Greek, Syriac, and Latin versions (see Puech 1999: 575-76).

with matters of rule and council through the West Semitic verbal root *MLK* would make it a most suitable name or title for the Ammonite royal god (see Hübner 1992: 252-256).[13]

Epigraphic evidence for El's influence in Iron Age Transjordan is found in the plaster inscriptions from Dayr ʻAllā in the Jordan valley (Hoftijzer and van der Kooij 1976; Caquot and Lemaire 1977; Hackett 1980; *COS* 2.27). While the language classification of these texts is debated (see, e.g., Huehnergard 1991; McCarter 1991; Pardee 1991), an Ammonite classification of the script is well supported (see, e.g., Hackett 1980: 9-19; Cross 2003: 100-101 and n. 6; cf. Naveh 1987: 109-110). In the inscriptions, the deity El figures prominently, even centrally, among the gods. The text presents El as exercising authority over an assembly of deities, or perhaps two separate divine groups, designated the *ʾlhn* and the *šdyn*, and acting as head of the pantheon (Combination I lines 1-2, 6-7).

Likewise the biblical Balaam traditions in Numbers 22-24, to which the Dayr ʻAllā texts bear numerous parallels of language and content (see *COS* 2:142-145), show a preference for language and imagery of El, even in connection with the otherwise solidly Yahwistic tradition of the exodus:

ʾēl môṣîʾām mimmiṣrāyim kĕtôʻăpōt rĕʾēm lô

El, who brings them out of Egypt, is like the horns of a wild ox for him" (Num 23:22; 24:8).

Other connections between Dayr ʻAllā and biblical texts like these as well as Isaiah 14:13-20, Psalm 19:1, and the book of Job support B. Levine's contention of a regional center of El's worship in Transjordan during the Iron Age (Levine 1985: especially 333-38).

On the other hand, the Dayr ʻAllā inscription mentions no national groups or known national deities. H. J. Franken interpreted the building containing the inscriptions as a sanctuary, and the building remains included an abundance of pottery and other items from throughout the eastern Mediterranean, suggesting that it served an international population as a worship place connected with long-distance overland trade (see Franken 1991; Ibrahim and van der Kooij 1991). This international setting at Dayr ʻAllā would correspond to that of its biblical parallels in Numbers 22-24, the context of which is Israel's place and destiny among the nations. These international connotations resonate with the recognition of El as head of the pantheon in texts from throughout Syria-Palestine from LB to Iron Age times (see Herrmann 1999). El's role at Dayr ʻAllā thus seems to be more that of internationally recognized head of the pantheon than that of a national god to be claimed by any kingdom. That is to say, at Dayr ʻAllā and in these biblical texts, the emphasis in connection with El is more international than nationalistic in nature.

While the plaster texts from Dayr ʻAllā describe El as head of the pantheon in broad perspective, in the epigraphic references to Milkom, that deity's role may be understood in more nationalistic terms as the chief god of the Ammonites. While El was widely regarded throughout Syria-Palestine as a leading god and, at least at Late Bronze Ugarit, as head of the pantheon, Milkom's name may have had more nationalistic associations, especially in connection with the Ammonite monarchy.

4. Glyptic on Name Seals: Human Status and Divine Identity

The evidence for El and Milkom as the Ammonite royal god leads to a final category of data to consider, namely, iconography accompanying the relevant personal names on seals. As U. Hübner has demonstrated, no individual iconographic elements or motifs in seals can be characterized as uniquely Ammonite, although Hübner identifies some characteristically Ammonite tendencies and constellations of elements within the shared West Semitic inventory of glyptic (Hübner 1993: 148-49).[14] While inscribed iconographic name seals may provide a desirable collocation of text and image, there is rarely if ever an identifiable correlation between distinct seal imagery and the specific divine elements of names in the West Semitic seals (Keel and Uehlinger 1998: 310). To test this generalization in connection with the Ammonite per-

[13] Notwithstanding the formation of *milkom* with the *-m* suffix, an identification with *mlkm* in Ugaritic god lists or with a deity *Malkum* / *Malik* in texts from Mesopotamian, Ebla, and Mari is far from being established (see Puech 1999; cf. Hübner 1992: 252-256). What is more, *Mailkom* is to be distinguished from *Molek* in 1 Kgs 11:7, a distinction recognized in the biblical texts themselves (see 2 Kgs 23:10, 13).

[14] For similar conclusions regarding the seal iconography of Ammon's neighbors, see the other essays in Sass and Uehlinger 1993. Discussions of iconography generally follow the identification of seals as Ammonite based on language, script, and provenance as leading criteria (see Hübner 1993: 132-133; see also Aufrecht 1989: xii, 350-351).

sonal names, one might begin with the relatively infrequent *mlkm* names.

Four of the five epigraphic *mlkm* names known to date are found on name seals. Of those four, only two occur as the name of the seal owner (*CAI* 127, *CAI* 129), the other two as the patronymic (*CAI* 1b, *CAI* 136). Not only is this too small a sample from which to establish a "significant series" of related iconographic elements (see Uehlinger 1993), but the accompanying iconographic elements in question, namely, the four-winged scarab and two sphinxes flanking what appears to be a small plant (*CAI* 127), are also found on other Ammonite seals whose owners have *ʾl* names (four-winged scarab: H 28, *CAI* 32, *CAI* 122; sphinx: H 31=*CAI* 39a; *CAI* 33, *CAI* 84, *CAI* 108) and also on other Ammonite seals (see Aufrecht 1989: 351-52). In short, the seal iconography tells us nothing directly about the deities mentioned in the personal names. It may, however, tell us something about the name bearers.

As discussed by R. Younker, one collection of iconographic motifs stands out among the Ammonite name seals, namely, the four-winged scarab flanked by two standards each topped by a lunar crescent or a lunar/solar disc appearing in a middle register of the seal demarcated by horizontal lines (Younker 1989). This constellation of elements appears in the seal of *mlkm'wr 'bd b'lyš'* from Tall al-'Umayrī (*CAI* 129). It also appears in two other Ammonite seals, those of *mnḥm bn ynḥm* (*CAI* 42)—which was found in a tomb with seals of *'dnnr* (*CAI* 40) and *'dnplṭ* (*CAI* 17), both designated as "servants" of the Ammonite king (Amminadab (*'bd 'mndb*). The other seal containing the iconography in question is that belonging to *šwḥr hnss* , the latter element being a title translated "the standard-bearer" (*CAI* 68).

As Younker points out, all three Ammonite seals displaying this iconographic motif belong to individuals who, either by virtue of their titles ("servant" [*'bd*] of the king, "standard-bearer") or close associations with others bearing them, have observable "royal connections" (Younker 1989: 376). Accordingly, Younker suggests that the four-winged scarab, though not unique to Ammonite seals, served as "the central motif for the royal insignia of Ammon." One of those individuals, whose title most explicitly identifies him as a member of the royal court (*'bd b'lyš'*, *CAI* 129), bears a clearly theophoric name, and the deity it mentions is Milkom.

Younker suggests that the meaning of *mklm 'wr*, "Milkom is (a) light," and the solar and lunar iconographic motifs on the seal might be expressions of Milkom's character as an astral deity (Younker 1989: 378). While such associations may have indeed pertained to Milkom—see Zeph 1:5, which Younker cites—the possibility for connecting the onomastic and iconographic evidence in this instance runs up against a couple of problems. The appearance of this iconographic scene on three Ammonite seals is significant in regard to the iconography itself; however, drawing a connection with specific theophoric name elements would require more than one example to establish a meaningful correlation between the iconography and the deity mentioned. Second, the two other seals bearing this iconography belong to owners with names lacking any astral connotations *mnḥm bn ynḥm*, *CAI* 42 and *šwḥr hnss*, *CAI* 68).

Furthermore and as noted at the beginning of this discussion, theophoric personal names, rather than identifying a deity's specific traits, as a rule express sentiments that are fairly generic in nature and that might apply to various deities (see above). More specific to this case, West Semitic names with the element *'(w)r* occur in connection with various divine elements— *wh(w)/yw*, *ʾl*, and *šdy* in biblical and epigraphic Hebrew (see Fowler 1988: 335); *ʾl* in other Ammonite names (Aufrecht 1989: 356); *qs* in a Nabatean altar inscription (Bartlett 1989: 201, 206). Given the relative paucity of names mentioning other deities among these name groups (see above), the occurrence of the name element *'(w)r* with these most frequently mentioned gods says little about the distinctive character or attributes of the deities in question.

While the iconographic motif in question, like others, may not relate directly to the divine element in a theophoric name, it occurs in all three cases on seals of individuals who enjoyed an elevated status within Ammonite society. In the case of *mlkn 'wr*, that status is indicated by his title as a royal official. In view of the limited number of deities named in the Ammonite onomasticon, it is significant that a servant of the king would identify himself by a name invoking Milkom.

The only recurring divine element in the names of Ammonite kings, as noted, is *ʾl* , and the king identified on the seal of *mlkm 'wr*, bears a theophoric name in which the divine element is *b ʾl*. These divine elements in royal theophoric names come into focus when one takes seriously the role

of the royal god indicated in the statuary and the national god's dominance in name-giving among the other groups of the southern Levant (see above). Like *b'l* "lord" in the king's name, onomastic *mlkm* in the name of a royal official serves as a fitting title for the same god invoked as *'l* in other royal names and in the overwhelming majority of Ammonite names generally speaking. It bears repeating that the etymology of *mlkm* makes it most suitable as a divine title with explicitly royal associations.

Conclusion: Milkom as a Distinctly Ammonite Title for El

The dominance of the theophoric element *'l* in Ammonite personal names suggests the importance of the deity El in the context of family religion. The most frequently invoked deities in Moabite, Edomite, and Hebrew theophoric names, and thus those who played a similar role in family religion among those language groups, also happen to be those recognized as national or "state" deities based on the total written evidence. What is more, in each group of theophoric names those leading deities tend to be referenced with roughly the same frequency. The occurrence of the Ammonite name element *'l* with approximately the same percentage as Kemosh, Qos, and onomastic forms of Yahweh in theophoric names in Moabite, Edomite, and Hebrew, respectively, suggests that among the Ammonites, too, the most popular family deity likewise corresponds to the chief national deity, in this case El.

The thoroughgoing devotion to El among the Ammonite population reflected in the onomasticon belonged to a more widespread and longstanding worship of the deity throughout Syria-Palestine. In contrast with the more traditional and widespread form of family piety expressed in personal names, the differentiation of Ammonite El in more nationalistic contexts like the Amman Citadel Inscription and in biblical texts, was expressed through the title Milkom—a title distinct to the Ammonite form of El in his capacity as royal god, a role reflected in the Ammonite statuary. The role of the royal god reflects a working notion of one god who was preeminent above others among the broader population, the same situation indicated by the dominance of the "El" personal names.

The role of the royal god would be most relevant to the Ammonite monarchy, whose names—in keeping with the broader Ammonite name-giving—tend to favor the divine element "El." At the same time, it is fitting for a royal official to identify himself by a Milkom name on the same seal that bears what might have been the royal iconography of the Ammonite kingdom. In sum, given the present state of the evidence, Milkom is best understood as a distinctly Ammonite form of El.[15]

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[15] The identification of the Ammonite god as both Milkom and El is at least in some degree analogous to the equation of Yahweh and El in Israelite religion, the nature and origins of which remain debated (see, e.g., Eissfeldt 1966; Cross 1973: 44-75; Smith 2002: 32-42).

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