The Eyes Have It

An In-Depth Study of the Tell Brak Eye Idols in the 4th Millennium BCE: with a primary focus on function and meaning

Honours Thesis
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Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in the Department of Archaeology at the University of Sydney, Australia, 2016.
“In the present state of our knowledge there are very few archaeological discoveries which can be described as unique, but one class of objects from Brak is unique—the eye-idols or images which turned up in thousands in the grey brick stratum of the earlier Eye-Temple”

Statement of Authorship

The research described in this thesis, except where referenced, is the original work of the author and was a discrete project supervised by Dr Alison Betts. This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution. No other individual’s work has been used without accurate referencing and acknowledgement in the main text of the thesis.

Arabella Cooper,
November 2016
Acknowledgments

As with any major study or work, you do not toil in isolation and the writing of this thesis is no different. I first would like to thank my supervisor Professor Alison Betts, and even more so the wonderful staff at the Nicholson Museum Candace Richards and Karen Alexander for their patience and advise. I would also like to thank Professor Stephen Bourke for kindly sending me very useful journal articles, and Ana Becerra at CCANESA for sharing her knowledge, experience and always having something kind to say.

I would also like to acknowledge the advice and sources provided about Tell Brak by Professor Henry Wright, Professor Geoff Emberling and Professor Timothy Matney who was kind enough to show me some unpublished studies he undertook on the Eye-Idols which proved to be invaluable.

To my friends in Archaeology Honours 2016, you know who you are and you know how much you mean to me.
Abstract

Age has often been mistaken as an indication of simplicity in design, style and artistic technique in artefacts, but this is not the case when applied to the Eye-Idols from Tell Brak. Eye-Idols were first discovered by Professor M.E.L Mallowan during the 1937 and 1938 spring excavations of Tell Brak in north Syria. The Eye-Idols have been dated to the Early to Middle Northern Uruk period. They were found mainly in the Grey Eye-Temple Complex, which gained its name from these unique artefacts found in large numbers within. They appear to have been offerings deposited in a procedure of ritual discard, but the true meaning, function and cultic value of these unusual artefacts remains elusive and undetermined.

In his original 1947 Excavation Report, Mallowan describes the discovery of thousands of Eye-Idols in an assortment of sizes and designs, but today the location of only a small number is known. Only on the most superficial level is the artefact type an example of a simple or basic design; instead they are purposely abstract and simple in their stylised representation of what is a possible human form. There is extensive archaeological evidence across northern and southern Mesopotamia from the Late Chalcolithic and into the Uruk period showing that artisans had the artistic and technical ability to construct and reproduce accurate and detailed examples of the human figure and face, but in the case of the Eye-Idols, the choice of simplicity is clearly deliberate.

This study undertakes a more thorough analysis of the artefact type through the utilisation of scholarly texts, museum collections, recent excavations in Northern Mesopotamia and a hands-on study of the Nicholson Museum’s Collection of Eye-Idols. This has been done to better understand the value, meaning and importance of these small, apparently unassuming, but nevertheless complex artefacts, and the insights they reveal about those who created and used them.
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Eye-Idol Design Features

1. Examples of the most Frequent Eye Section Configurations for Single and Multiple Eye-Idols, compilation created from observing all examples listed in later figures.


2. Examples of all known Common Chest Designs for Single and Multiple Eye-Idols, compilation created from observing all examples listed in later figures.


3. Examples of all Ornate Chest known Designs for Single and Multiple Eye-Idols, compilation created from observing all examples listed in later figures.


4. Examples of all known Head Wear for Single and Multiple Eye-Idols, compilation created from observing all examples listed in later figures.


Type 1 – Single Eye-Idol Type


1.2. Single Eye-Idols, 10668/1-8 Catalogue nos. 284 a-h, Deir ez-Zor Museum. Acquired 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated 3200BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Alabaster, Average H.4cm.


1.3. Single Eye-Idol, 51.59.4, The Metropolitan Museum. Acquired 1937-38 on behalf of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Middle Uruk, 3700-3500BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Gypsum Alabaster, H.5.4cm.

1.4. Single Eye-Idol, 51.59.10, The Metropolitan Museum. Ceded in the division of finds to the British School of Archaeology in Iraq. Acquired 1951, gift of the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Middle Uruk, 3700-3500BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Gypsum Alabaster, H.8.9cm, W.5.3cm, D.1.9cm.


1.7. Single Eye-Idol, 51.59.2, The Metropolitan Museum. Ceded in the division of finds to the British School of Archaeology in Iraq. Acquired 1951, gift of the Institute of Archaeology, University College London, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Middle Uruk, 3700-3500BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Gypsum Alabaster, H.6.02cm.


1.12. Single Eye-Idol, 126235, The British Museum. Acquired 1938, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Late Uruk, 3500-3300BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Gypsum, H.5.4cm, W.2.9cm, D.0.7cm.


1.15. Single Eye-Idol, 126480, The British Museum. Acquired 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Late Uruk, 3300-3000BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Limestone, H.7.2cm, W.4.2cm. D.0.7cm.
1.16. Single Eye-Idol, 126481, The British Museum. Acquired 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Late Uruk, 3300-3000BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Calcite, H.5.7cm, W.3.3cm, D.0.7cm.


1.18. Single Eye-Idol, 126483, The British Museum. Acquired 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Late Uruk, 3300-3000BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Alabaster, H.4.6cm, W.2.8cm, D.0.62cm.

1.19. Single Eye-Idol, 126485, The British Museum. Acquired 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Late Uruk, 3300-3000BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Gypsum Alabaster, H.4.8cm, W.2.7cm, D.0.8cm.


1.26. Single Eye-Idol, NM59.16, The Nicholson Museum, acquired 1959, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Late Jemdet Nasr Period 3200BCE, Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Crystalline Alabaster, H.5.1cm, W.3.6cm, D.0.5cm.


1.29. Single Eye-Idol, 125786, The British Museum. Acquired 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Late Uruk, 3300-3000BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Calcite, H.4cm, W.3.1cm, D.0.6cm.

1.30. Single Eye-Idol, 126231, The British Museum. Acquired 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Jemdet Nasr Period 3000BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Calcite, H.5.1cm, W.3.6cm, D.0.7cm.
1.31. Single Eye-Idol, 1 HM 105, Area B, Tell Hamoukar, North-Eastern Syria. Excavated 1999 by The First Season of Syrian-American Investigations at Hamoukar. Dated to the Middle of the 4th Millennium BCE, Bone, H. 4.3cm, W. 2cm.


1.32. Single Eye-Idol, 126231, The British Museum. Acquired 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Jemdet Nasr Period 3000BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Calcite, H.5.1cm, W.3.6cm, D.0.7cm.

1.33. Single Eye-Idol, 126299, The British Museum. Acquired 1938, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Jemdet Nasr Period 3000BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Calcite, H.6.98cm, W.4.4cm, D.0.7cm.

1.34. Single Eye-Idol, NM66.133, The Nicholson Museum, acquired 1966, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple, Tell Brak, Syria. Dated to the Middle of the 4th Millennium BCE, Crystalline Alabaster, H.4.95cm, W.3.02cm, D.0.6cm.


**Eye-Idol Type – Fragments**


1.37. Single Eye-Idol Eye Section Fragment with Head Wear, NM50.292, The Nicholson Museum, acquired 1950 from the Institute of Archaeology in London, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple, Tell Brak, Syria, Dated to the Jemdet Nasr Period, 3100-2900 BCE. Actual Date 4th Millennium BCE, Crystalline Alabaster, H.2.35cm, W.3.32cm, D.0.5cm.
1.38. Decorated Eye-Idol with Head Wear Fragment, 126465, The British Museum. Acquired 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Late Uruk, 3300-3000BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Calcite, H.2.9cm, W.1.6cm, D.0.4cm.

1.39. Decorated Eye-Idol with Head Wear Fragment, TW-1648:2, 111824, TB21037. 2001-2002 Excavations at Tell Brak, conducted by Geoff Emberling and Helen McDonald. Found in a Level 18 Building as part of jar contents. Dated to mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Bone, H.1.95cm.

1.40. Eye-Idol Eye Section with neck Fragments, 1 HM 56, 1 HM 57, 1 HM 58, 1 HM 59. Area B, Tell Hamoukar, North-Eastern Syria. Excavated 1999 by The First Season of Syrian-American Investigations at Hamoukar. Dated to the Middle of the 4th Millennium BCE, Bone, H. 4.3cm, W. 2cm.


Type 2 – Decorated Single Eye-Idol – Idols with Chest Designs

2.1. Decorated Single Eye-Idol with Chest Designs, 51.59.3, The Metropolitan Museum. Acquired 1937-38 on behalf of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Middle Uruk, 3700-3500BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Gypsum Alabaster, H.7.3cm, W.4.4cm, D.0.7cm.

2.2. Decorated Single Eye-Idol with Chest Designs, 51.59.7, The Metropolitan Museum. Acquired 1937-38 on behalf of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq; ceded in the division of finds to the British School of Archaeology in Iraq; acquired by the Museum in 1951, gift of the Institute of Archaeology, University College London. M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Middle Uruk, 3700-3500BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Gypsum Alabaster, H.7.6cm.

Syria. Dated to the Middle of the 4th Millennium BCE, Crystalline Alabaster, H.6.5cm, W.4.4cm, D.0.7cm.

2.4. Decorated Single Eye-Idol with Chest Designs, NM59.17, The Nicholson Museum, acquired 1959. M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Late Jemdet Nasr Period, 3200BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Alabaster, H.5.4cm, W.3.9cm, D.0.6cm.

2.5. Decorated Single Eye-Idol with Chest Designs, NM59.18, The Nicholson Museum, acquired 1959. M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Late Jemdet Nasr Period, 3200BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Alabaster, H.5.7cm, W.4.6cm, D.0.8cm.


**Type 2 – Decorated Single Eye-Idol Type – Idols with Head Wear**

2.11. Decorated Single Eye-Idol with Head Wear, 51.59.5, The Metropolitan Museum. Acquired 1937-38 on behalf of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Middle Uruk, 3700-3500BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Gypsum Alabaster, H.7.6cm.

2.12. Decorated Single Eye-Idol with Head Wear, 51.59.13, The Metropolitan Museum. Acquired 1937-38 on behalf of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq; ceded in the division of finds to the British School of Archaeology in Iraq; acquired by the Museum in 1951, gift of the Institute of Archaeology, University College London. M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Middle Uruk, 3700-3500BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Gypsum Alabaster, H.7.47cm.


2.15. Decorated Single Eye-Idol with Head Wear, F.10. Acquired in 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Early Jemdet Nasr Period, 3100BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Alabaster.

2.16. Decorated Single Eye-Idol with Head Wear, Figure F. Acquired in 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Early Jemdet Nasr Period, 3100BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Alabaster.


2.19. Decorated Single Eye-Idol with Head Wear, Figure H. Acquired in 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Early Jemdet Nasr Period, 3100BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Alabaster.


2.22. Decorated Single Eye-Idol with Head Wear and Chest Designs, F 40.1 Acquired in 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Early Jemdet Nasr Period, 3100BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Alabaster.


**Type 3 – Multiple Eye-Idol Type – Multiple Eye-Idols with a Single Body**

3.1 Multiple Eye-Idol, NM50.293, The Nicholson Museum, acquired 1950, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple, Tell Brak, Syria. Dated to the Jemdet Nasr, Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Crystalline Alabaster, H.4cm, W.4.2cm, D.0.6cm.

3.2 Multiple Eye-Idol, NM50.290, The Nicholson Museum, acquired 1950, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple, Tell Brak, Syria. Dated to the 4th Millennium BCE. Crystalline Alabaster, H.5.1cm, W.4cm, D.0.69cm.

3.3 Multiple Eye-Idol, 126494, The British Museum. Acquired 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Jemdet Nasr Period 3000BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Calcite, H.3.6cm, W.4.1cm, D.0.7cm.
3.4 Multiple Eye-Idol, F 40.4 Acquired in 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Early Jemdet Nasr Period, 3100BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Alabaster.


3.5 Multiple Eye-Idol, F 40.7 Acquired in 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Early Jemdet Nasr Period, 3100BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Alabaster.


3.6 Multiple Eye-Idol, 51.59.8, The Metropolitan Museum. Acquired 1937-38 on behalf of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Middle Uruk, 3700-3500BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Gypsum Alabaster, H.7.3cm, W.5.2cm, D.0.7cm.

3.7 Multiple Eye-Idol, 51.59.6, The Metropolitan Museum. Acquired 1937-38 on behalf of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Middle Uruk, 3700-3500BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Gypsum Alabaster, H.6.4cm, W.5.1cm, D.0.8cm.

3.8 Multiple Eye-Idol, F 40.5 Acquired in 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Early Jemdet Nasr Period, 3100BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Alabaster.


3.9 Multiple Eye-Idol, F.22. Acquired in 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Early Jemdet Nasr Period, 3100BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Alabaster.

3.10 Multiple Eye-Idol with Smaller Examples Upon the Larger, 11290143. National Museum Aleppo, acquired in 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated 3500-3300BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Alabaster, H.4.8cm.

3.11 Multiple Eye-Idol with Smaller Examples Upon the Larger, 51.59.11, The Metropolitan Museum. Acquired 1937-38 on behalf of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Middle Uruk, 3700-3500BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Gypsum Alabaster, H.6.5cm, W.4.2cm, D.0.6cm.

3.12 Multiple Eye-Idol with Smaller Examples Upon the Larger, F 40.9 Acquired in 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Early Jemdet Nasr Period, 3100BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Alabaster.


3.13 Multiple Eye-Idol with Smaller Examples Upon the Larger, 51.59.9, The Metropolitan Museum. Acquired 1937-38 on behalf of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Middle Uruk, 3700-3500BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Gypsum Alabaster, H.6.5cm, W.4.2cm, D.0.6cm.


3.15 Decorated Multiple Eye-Idol, 126475, The British Museum. Acquired 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Jemdet Nasr Period 3000BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Calcite, H.5.71cm.

3.16 Decorated Multiple Eye-Idol, 126492, The British Museum. Acquired 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Jemdet Nasr Period 3000BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Calcite, H.5.08cm.
3.17 Decorated Multiple Eye-Idol with Smaller Examples Upon the Larger, F 40.6, Acquired in 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Early Jemdet Nasr Period, 3100BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Alabaster.


3.18 Decorated Multiple Eye-Idol, 42. Acquired in 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Early Jemdet Nasr Period, 3100BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Alabaster.


**Spectacle Idols – Stone Examples**

4.1 North Syrian Gable Seal depicting Spectacle Idols, Figure 1. Acquired in 1939, North Syria. Hogarth Collection, Ashmolean Museum. Dated before 3200BCE, Uruk, Late Chalcolithic or early Jemdet Nasr Period. Serpentine, H.3.5cm.


4.2 Unique Stone Spectacle Idol, Figure 2. Acquired in 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Shaft No. 2, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Early Jemdet Nasr Period, 3100BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Alabaster, H.5cm.


4.3 Stone Spectacle Idol, Figure 4. Acquired in 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Shaft No. 3, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Early Jemdet Nasr Period, 3100BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Alabaster., H.6.3cm.


4.4 Stone Spectacle Idols, Figure 8, Figure 9. Acquired in 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Grey Brick Stratum, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Early Jemdet Nasr Period, 3100BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Alabaster.

4.5 Stone Spectacle Idol, 126478, The British Museum. Acquired 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Late Uruk, 3300-3000BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Calcite, H.4.8cm, 3.7cm, 2.4cm.

4.6 Stone Spectacle Idols, Figure 11, Figure 12. Acquired in 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Grey Brick Stratum, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Early Jemdet Nasr Period, 3100BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Alabaster.


4.7 Stone Spectacle Idol, 126473, The British Museum. Acquired 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Late Uruk, 3300-3000BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Stone, H.4.44cm.

4.8 Stone Spectacle Idols, Figure 10, Figure 11. Acquired in 1939, M.E.L Mallowan Excavations, Grey Brick Stratum, Eye Temple Early Phase, Tell Brak, Syria. Originally Dated Early Jemdet Nasr Period, 3200BCE. Actual date mid to late 4th Millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, Alabaster.


4.9 Stone Spectacle Idol, 33-3-141, Penn Museum. American School Oriental Research/ University Museum Expedition to Tepe Gawra, Iraq; E. A. Speiser, 1933, Level IX, Gawra, Iraq. Dated to Gawra XI, 4000BCE. Marble, H.9cm, W.6cm, D.4.8cm.


4.11 Stone Spectacle Idol, Fig.2. Acquired in 2002, Excavations at TB6030, CH Level 10, Tell Brak, Syria. Dated to the Middle Uruk, Period. Alabaster H.4.5cm, W.3cm, D.1.9cm.

4.12 Stone Spectacle Idol, Fig. 8, Acquired 2006-207, Excavations at Area TW Level 20 in a Wall Foundation, Tell Brak, Syria. Dated to levels earlier then Level 20, 4300-4000BCE. Mosul Marble. H.21.4cm.


4.13 Stone Spectacle Idol, Figure T, PL XLIV, Acquired 1935, Excavations at Stratum IX, Tepe Gawra, Iraq. Stone, W.10cm.


4.14 Stone Spectacle Idols, Figure 23, Excavations at Susa, Susa, Iran. Alabaster.


4.15 Various Stone Spectacle Idols, Figure 22 a-9, Excavations at Choga Mish, Choga Mish, Western Iran. Stone.


4.16 Various Stone Spectacle Idols, Figure 35 a-e, Excavations at Hacinebi Tepe 1990s, Hacinebi Tepe, Turkey, Stone.

**Spectacle Idols – Coarse Clay Examples**


4.23 Coarse Clay Spectacle Idol, 36-6-147, Penn Museum, Level XIA, Tepe Gawra, Iraq. Dated Early Uruk, 4000BCE. Terracotta, H.12.5cm, W.11.5cm.


4.26 Coarse Clay Spectacle Idol, Figure 5, Acquired 1936, Excavations from Stratum 11, Tepe Gawra, Iraq.

4.27 Coarse Clay Spectacle Idols, Figure 20 a-e, excavated 1968, Tell Qalinj Agha, Iraq.


4.28 Coarse Clay Spectacle Idol, Figure 10, Tell Kashkashuk, Northern Mesopotamia.


4.29 Coarse Clay Spectacle Idol, Figure 1, Pirot Hoyuk, Turkey.


4.30 Coarse Clay Spectacle Idols, Figure 32, Arslantepe, Turkey.


4.31 Coarse Clay Spectacle Idols, Figure 18 a-b, Grai Resh, Northern Iraq.


4.32 Coarse Clay Spectacle Idol, TAH/89/847/1874, Excavations from the Base of the Main Tell, Tell Abu Hafur, Northern Syria. Dated to the Uruk, Period 4000-3500BCE. Fired Clay, H.15.3cm.

Bielińska, D. 2016. "A Spectacle Idol from Tell Abu Hafur (North Syria) and Its Possible Function." Études et Travaux XXIX:34.

Other Figures

5.1 Statue from Mari, 2072, National Museum, Damascus, Syria, Dated to 2550-2250BCE, Gypsum, H.23cm, W.14cm.

5.2 Statue from Mari, 10103, National Museum, Damascus, Syria, Dated to 2550-2250BCE, Gypsum, H.25.3cm, W.6.9cm.

5.3 Statue of Queen Napirsu, Sb 2731, The Louvre. Excavated from the Acropolis at Susa, 1903. Dated to
1340-1300BCE. Bronze.

5.4 Standing Male Worshipper Statue, 40.156, The Metropolitan Museum, Acquired 1940. Excavated Tell Asmar. Dated to 2900-2600BCE. Gypsum Alabaster, H.29.5cm, W.12.9cm.

5.5 Cylinder Seal, 42b, Louvre Museum, excavated at Choga Mish. Dated to Late Uruk, Period, gypsum.


5.6 Cylinder Seal, Figure A, Originally from Tell Brak, Private Collection, Aleppo.


5.7 Chronological Framework of Mesopotamia


5.8 Map of Major sites in Mesopotamia during the fifth and fourth millennia BC.


5.9 Drawings of the Eye-Temple from the original 1938-1939 Excavations

Introduction

Northern Mesopotamia

Mesopotamia is considered the ‘Cradle of Civilization’ with attention centred upon the developments in the South. But Northern Mesopotamia, and specifically north-eastern Syria in the Khabur Basin (Figure 5.8), are just as significant in terms of human development. Excavations at Nadawiyah Ain Askar, near Palmyra in 1996 revealed the earliest presence of *Homo erectus* in the region from a skull fragment dated to 450,000. Excavations at Dederiyah near Aleppo in 1996 also revealed the presence of Palaeolithic burials dated to approximately 60,000 BCE. The first evidence in the region of pre-agricultural settlements is seen in the Epi-Palaeolithic Period approximately 12,000 BCE. Humans are known to have been present in Northern Mesopotamia for many millennia, but their physical mark upon the landscape is minimal prior to 10,000 BCE, likely due to the mobile nature of early populations. But it is from 8000-7000 BCE that a shift towards permanent settlement and agriculture began to emerge across a broader range of landscapes in northern Syria, and by 7000 BCE permanent settlements became frequent and common in river valley areas like the Khabur Basin.

Northern Mesopotamia is geographically defined by the rivers and tributaries of the Tigris and the Euphrates that flow from Turkey through Iraq and Syria, and into the south. Northern Mesopotamia is dominated by a large plain abundant in water sources, only a small number of which are permanent. Thus, early agriculture relied upon domesticated rain-fed plant varieties such as barley, lentils, einkorn and emmer wheat. Agriculture was also supported by animal domestication within these early settlements, by the late 7th millennium BCE cattle, sheep and goats.

Pottery appeared in in the late 7th Millennium BCE, as can be seen at sites such as at Seker al-Aheimer and Sai Abyad in north-eastern Syria, and it is the changes in pottery across Northern Mesopotamia at different sites that act as important chronological indicators, showing increased interactions and connection between peoples in the region. Although the specific developments of this period remain widely uncertain it is known that populations grew, as did site size, into the 6th and 5th Millennia BCE. Some notable Northern Mesopotamian sites are Tell Brak, Domuztepe, Kazane and Nineveh. Into the Fifth Millennium BCE sites

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1 Ur et al. 2007, 587.
2 Eisenberg 2000, 8-9.
3 Eisenberg 2000, 8-9.
4 Eisenberg 2000.
5 Ur et al. 2007, 588.
6 Campbell 2011.
7 Ur 2007; Ur 2010; Stein 2012.
8 Campbell 2011.
9 Campbell 2011.
10 Stein 2012, 130-132.
11 Eisenberg 2000, 8-9.
continued to grow, becoming surrounded by smaller settlements. This can particularly be observed at Tell Brak and Tell al-Hawa. The earliest structures began to emerge in the late 8th Millennium BCE as circular buildings such as those at Jerf el-Ahmar, but by the 6th Millennium BCE rectangular structures became the most common architectural forms across northern Mesopotamia.

Southern Mesopotamia and the sites of Uruk and Ur have often been linked to the origin of the development of civilisation and the city. But the excavations and surveys of Joan and David Oates in the 1990s up to 2006 at the site of Tell Brak have begun to challenge these accepted views. Instead, it is now considered that Northern Mesopotamia was highly developed in terms of monumentality, prestige goods, industrialisation and urbanisation at levels that can rival the South, and overall the earliest cities are as likely to have developed in Northern Mesopotamia, specifically Syria, as in Iraq and Iran. The original views of Northern Mesopotamia developing after the South as a peripheral entity is up for revision, and it is now likely that sites like Tell Brak, and to a lesser extent Tell Hamoukar, Arslantepe, Hacinebi, and Tepe Gawra were points of this human and societal development.

Tell Brak and the Eye-Idols

Tell Brak is situated within the Khabur Basin in North-Eastern Syria on the Jaghjagh river and on central trade routes between Assyria and the Levant, and Anatolia and Southern Mesopotamia. The site was occupied continuously from at least the 6th millennium BCE to the end of the 2nd millennium BCE, reaching dense and intensive urban development during the late 5th to the 4th millennium BCE, or more specifically during the Early to Middle Northern Uruk (Figure 5.7).

The Eye-Idols were first discovered by Professor M.E.L Mallowan during the 1937 and 1938 spring excavations of Tell Brak. They were found mainly in the Grey Eye-Temple Complex; which gained its name from these unique artefacts found in large numbers within. Mallowan reported that there were thousands excavated, but the exact number is unknown. In the majority of cases the Eye-Idols were mixed into the mortar and brickwork filling the temple, making it highly likely that as artefacts they are votive offerings deposited in a procedure of ritual discard within the infilled cult structure of the Eye Temple Complex as a

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12 Stein 2012.
14 Ur 2007, 586-587.
15 Mallowan 1947, 38-39
17 Oates 1993.
18 Oates 1994, 173.
19 Mallowan 1947 1-2.
21 Mallowan 1947, 32.
donation to an unspecified Eye divinity. These artefacts have only in recent decades been discovered in small numbers at the nearby site of Tell Hamoukar, but overall their distribution can only be traced at present to these two sites, with the largest cache coming from Tell Brak.

Eye Idols are almost exclusively found at Tell Brak during the Early to Middle Northern Uruk period. Eye Idols were probably high quality, high cost items, and functioned beyond simple utilitarian purposes, holding significant value and meaning in 4th Millennium Society. This artefact type is anthropomorphic and abstract in design. The figures have no facial features. They have oblong bodies devoid of any indications of limbs or gender. The body is surmounted by a neck or stem upon which sits a single or multiple set of eyes. These are, large with deeply set orbits and a single eyebrow. Above the eyes there can be indications of headwear, whilst upon the body there may be simple patterns, commonly zig-zags or dots. They are very thin and unable to stand upright easily, and are never larger than 13cm in height. They are most commonly carved from gypsum alabaster or bone. Initially they were dated to the Jamdat Nasr period [3000-3200BCE] by M.E.L Mallowan, but this has now been revised to the 4th millennium BCE because of more recent fieldwork. The dating of the Idols has been much debated, modified and reassessed over time through excavations carried out in the 1990s and early 2000s at Tell Brak within Areas CH and TW, as well as at Tell Hamoukar.

The Significance of Understanding Eye-Idols

The Eye-Idols as an artefact type are characterised by their unique and peculiar design, but also by the lack of understanding that surrounds their meaning and function. The Eye-Idols, despite being widely recognised and a common item in numerous museum collections, have not been well studied so that there is a general lack of clarity and in-depth focus as to their purpose, meaning and function within 4th Millennium society. This lack of cohesion is widely seen through incorrect dating, provenance and indefinite classification and identification, particularly in their frequent mislabeling as Spectacle Idols, predominantly due to the similar eye configuration.
The primary focus of this thesis is on this 4th Millennium artefact type known as the Eye-Idol. The study is mainly based on a cache of artefacts of this type from Tell Brak, and the smaller collection excavated at Tell Hamoukar. To broaden the field of comparison, Eye-Idols, Spectacle Idols and a small number of related artefacts have also been examined with similar characteristics and contexts found in comparable sites such as from Hacmebi in the Euphrates River Valley of south-east Turkey and Tepe Gawra in northwestern Iraq, as well as other less significant Anatolian and Southern Mesopotamian sites.

The study of the Eye-Idols is deemed significant as on a most basic level the exact meaning, function and value of these artefacts in 4th millennium society at Tell Brak and Tell Hamoukar is still uncertain. As result, there are numerous theories and explanations that surround the artefact type, but little work has been done to assess the merit of these views. The number of studies focusing specifically on the Eye-Idols is small, and most are considered in conjunction with the Spectacle Idol type. The chief aim of this thesis therefore is to form a more comprehensive understanding of the Eye-Idol artefact type to better answer the question of the function and meaning of the Eye-Idols within the society of Tell Brak and within Northern Mesopotamian society more widely in the 4th Millennium BCE. Although this question may seem simplistic it is multifaceted and complex once aspects such as iconography, meaning, function and typology are considered, and when the archaeological context of the Idols at Tell Brak and the wider societal context and related evidence across the region are explored.

Age is often mistaken as an indication of simplicity in design, style and artistic technique in artefacts, but this is not the case when viewing the Eye-Idols from Tell Brak. They are only on the most superficial level an example of a simple or basic design. The Eye-Idols are purposely abstract and simple in their stylised representation of what is a possible human form, as there is extensive archaeological evidence across the region of northern and southern Mesopotamia from the Late Chalcolithic and into the Uruk period that conveys the artistic and technical ability to construct and reproduce accurate and detailed examples of the human figure and face. Therefore, it is highly plausible that the intended features of the Eye-Idols are supposed to be basic; the decision of the artist and overall stylistic plan of the artefact type created by choice to depict clear-cut and simplistic chest designs and headwear, as well as emphasising the single or multiple sets of eyes, the feature acting as the point of focus and probably the predominant area of meaning. The Eye-Idols are undoubtedly anthropomorphic in their features, but the lack of discernible facial features beyond the eyes, or any indication

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33 Mallowan 1947.
34 Gibson 2000; Reichel 2009.
36 Gibson 2000; Stein 2012; Yaylali 2014.
37 Mallowan 1947; Matney 1986.
38 Bréniquet 1996; Yaylali 2014.
of limbs, or of gender and sexual features, means that there is no conclusive proof that the Idols were intended to represent a human face or body, or that they were created to represent a symbol or divinity.

It is generally observed that the most important identifiers of humanity are directly linked to the head, face and, of course, the eyes, with the soul, identity and personality all associated with the eyes by innumerable cultures. Examples can be seen in the rock art of early Indigenous Australians, rock carvings from Easter Island and petroglyphs from the Pacific Northwest, to name a few. The Near East is no different in this regard. There are numerous examples where the eyes are prominent, for example the Disc-Figurines from Kültepe, the Tell Asmar Statue Hoard and, in more modern times, the symbolism of the ‘evil eye’. It is a common response of the human brain to anthropomorphise the world that surrounds us, identifying instinctually and perhaps at times creating facial features. The Eye-Idol artefact type likely evokes this very human recognition instinct as the artisans of the period certainly understood the value and striking nature of the sets of eyes and the almost hypotonic quality of the heavy-set orbits and deeply incised eyebrows.

**Terminology**

The artefact type was given the designation ‘Idol’ by M.E.L Mallowan in his first published texts that included the artefact type excavated at Tell Brak. Other descriptors such as ‘figurine’ and ‘image’ have also been applied about the artefact type, but over time ‘Idol’ has become the most common and universal label used across academia and museum collections. However, it is problematic.

Originally during the research and analysis process, the question arose of whether continuing the use of this designation was appropriate and relevant when exploring and better defining the artefact type in this in-depth study, and whether the designation was still relevant and accurate in the modern day. It has been deemed important to question the title of the artefact type, as ‘Idol’ is a term not widely used in the multi-disciplinary field of archaeology today. An Idol describes a physical object that is worshipped as a representation of a deity, or an object to which religious or spiritual worship is directed. Although as one of many theories it is believed that the Eye-Idol artefact type was a direct representation of an unspecified deity or deities, there is no conclusive evidence to prove that they were the subject of worship, or that they definitively represented a deity. Along these lines Eye-Votive or Eye-dedication could be equally as useful as another prominent view is that they were used by devotees as representations of prayers or of themselves, and were linked to gaining

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41 Watson 2011, 89-90.
42 Zeidenberg 1989.
44 Watson 2011, 95.
45 Watson 2011, 89-94.
46 Mallowan 1965, 1947
47 Yaylali 2014, 4-6.
48 Andrae 1933
protection or good fortune. A more accurate and general title such as Eye-figurine or Eye-statuette would likely in a modern sense be more precise, as it seems highly unlikely that the definite meaning and function of the Eye-Idols will ever conclusively be known, although it is highly likely they were linked to religion and were ritually discarded. The view that the artefact type is likely a form of votive deposit rather than an Idol is supported by Robin Osborne⁴⁹, who has written extensively on the topic of votive offerings, and although her focus primarily utilises classical sources, her definition of a votive offering remains extremely valuable in understanding and accurately labelling the Eye-Idols. She concludes that “votive deposits share one or other of these distinctive features – religious imagery, precious or exotic material, distinctive architectural context and concentration of non-functional items”.⁵⁰ When viewing the Eye-Idols in this light they share these distinctive features, particularly the architectural context, the concentration of the hoard and non-functional aspects, which greatly adds support to the definition of Eye-Idols as votive offerings.

Yet the long-term use of the label ‘Eye-Idol’ has become so intertwined with the artefact type and is so widely used by scholars that the decision has been made to continue the use of the well-known and accepted title of Eye-Idol, but at the same time also acknowledge the limitation and likely inaccuracy of the title. It is instead a label given to the artefact in the past when this wording was more used and accepted, and the function and meaning of the artefact type was less defined.

Overall the major issue in studying the Eye-Idols is the inability to draw any definite conclusions in terms of function and meaning. Aspects such as material, production and context, both chronological and stratigraphic, can be better defined, and accurate conclusions formed. But in terms of the more intangible aspects such as understanding function and meaning of the Eye-Idols within the society of Tell Brak and within Northern Mesopotamian society in the 4th Millennium BCE it is important to note that this cannot be solved. This study therefore aims to put forward the most plausible and likely explanations about the artefact type to define and explain the Eye-Idols.

⁴⁹ Osborne 2004, 4-5
⁵⁰ Osborne 2004, 4.
Literature Review

Reviewing the major literature on Eye-Idols highlights the lacuna that exists in the research and study of the artefact type today. This review will look more broadly at the themes and shifting directions of literature and academia, to show the importance of this study. There is a high number of sources that reference the Eye-Idols, but artefact use tends only to be regarded as secondary in terms of evidence\(^{51}\), or occurs as vague reference to the excavation finds at Tell Brak\(^{52}\). The Idols are often discussed as a part of a broader look at the linked Spectacle Idol type\(^{53}\), with infrequent discussion as to whether they should be grouped together as a single group of Idols or if they are just merely linked. The context of the Eye-Idols is often vague and undiscussed. Headwear and chest designs are readily noted for their peculiar designs, but discussion of these is often disjointed and one sided, without acknowledgment of all the interpretations that have been presented.

It also must be noted that since the mid-1980s\(^{54}\) there has only been minimal focus upon the artefact type beyond the recent finds at Tell Brak\(^{55}\) and Hamoukar\(^{56}\). These discussions, although significant and valuable, are focussed on the redating of the Grey Eye-Temple Strata and the Eye-Idols themselves via recent excavations of Eye-Idols at both sites\(^{57}\). Overall the interpretations of the meaning, function, value and the importance of the Eye-Idols have changed little since the 1960s and 1970s, with the same descriptions being reused, with little attempt to add to them or scrutinise them closely.

The Eye-Idols were first discovered in the 1937 and 1938 spring excavations at Tell Brak, in the four strata of the Eye Temple complex at the southern end of the tell\(^{58}\). Excavations at the site were finalised in 1939, but the onset of WWII suspended the writing up and publication of the findings until 1947, when Mallowan published ‘Excavations at Brak and Chagar Bazar’\(^{59}\). It was in this report that Eye-Idols made their first appearance in the literature. As a resource this report is extremely valuable and detailed, and is a crucial read in providing a starting point for the study of Eye-Idols. But critically most of the information regarding stratigraphy and chronology\(^{60}\) has since been reconsidered and is deemed unreliable, while overall the report is disjointed and illogically ordered. Within this report the Eye-Idols were designated as form of votive offering, assigned to the date of the Jemdet Nasr period and linked to the Spectacle Idol artefacts through the creation of a typological framework\(^{61}\). The first proposed meaning and functions were cautiously approached

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\(^{51}\) Eisenberg 2000, 8-10; Ur et al. 2002, 9-10; Frangipane 2008, 7-10; Carter and Phillip 2010, 124.
\(^{54}\) Matney 1986; Bréniquet 1996; Porter 2014; Yaylali 2014, 6-9.
\(^{59}\) Mallowan 1947.
\(^{60}\) Mallowan 1947, 32-38.
\(^{61}\) Mallowan 1947, 198-199.
through a range of explanations in this text by Mallowan. These explanations were wide-ranging, general and predominantly unsubstantiated by evidence. Nevertheless, they permeate the later theoretical interpretations of many scholars, along with the typological framework he introduced. Regardless of its flaws, this report remains one of the most in-depth examinations at the artefact type and the artefact drawings in particular are of extremely high quality and have remained indispensable in the visual analysis of the artefacts, particularly Plate LI of noted Eye-Idol variations and types.

One of the major issues that permeates the literature is the difficulty to reconcile the artefacts first introduced by Mallowan, with actual Museum and University collections today. A fine example of this is seen in Plate LI, where some of the most impressive Eye-Idols, Numbers 36-38, and 43-46, cannot be located today for further investigation. It seems that in literature of the 1950s and 1960s authors readily used Mallowan’s Eye-Idol examples, referencing the original report, but did not record the actual locations of the artefacts. This aspect of the study of the artefact type is frustrating as the original list of thousands of Eye-Idols, both intact and fragmentary, now cannot be traced beyond the original report. Per Mallowan, the artefacts when first excavated were primarily split between the Aleppo Museum which was given priority, and the British Museum, with some being loaned to smaller collections such as the London Institute of Archaeology which received a high amount of Eye Idols, as well as the Ashmolean Museum and the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Cambridge. It was these British Collections that supplied many foreign Museums and University Collections, which have been used in this thesis to compile an inventory of what is considered the highest quality artefacts with traceable and reliable provenances.

The Spectacle Idol artefact type which is explored in depth in a later section is an artefact type that was found before the Eye-Idols were excavated in the 1937 and 1938, and their presence in the literature has become intrinsically linked with the Eye-Idols, and the origin for many explanations of the Eye-Idols. Spectacle Idols are visually like Eye-Idols but are cruder in design and material, and structurally are fundamentally different.

They have been excavated mainly at the sites of Tepe Gawra, Hacinebi, Hamoukar, Tell Brak, Elam and

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63 O.G.S 1957; Van Buren 1950; Riemschneider 1953.
64 Mallowan 1947, 35, 139.
65 O.G.S 1957; Porter 2014; Bréniquet 1996.
67 Mallowan 1947, 139.
68 Mallowan 1947, 139.
69 Frankfort 1949; Van Buren 1950; Riemschneider 1953; Van Buren 1955; O.G.S 1957; Fingesten 1959; Goff 1963.
70 Mallowan 1947: 89.
71 Mallowan 1947: 89.
72 Bréniquet 1996; Yaylali 2014.
Diyala. The artefact type is more dispersed geographically, but they are found in less concentrated numbers in comparison to the Eye-Idol artefact type. They are also found in a wider range of domestic and temple contexts compared with Eye-Idols. Both artefacts also generally date to the early to middle Northern Uruk period, and all these factors mean that across the literature they are often explored together or classed as the same artefact.

Thus, the major literature relating to Spectacle Idols is often linked to Eye-Idol literature, and can be difficult to differentiate. Some of the earliest and comprehensive examples of Spectacle Idols in literature are recorded in the excavation reports at Tepe Gawra by E.A Speiser in 1928, and 1935, and by Charles Bache in 1936. Here they were not called Spectacle Idols but were more generally classified as ‘Cult Symbols’. The theoretical discussion of the artefact type came to fruition through Walter Andrae in 1933 where he proposed that the Spectacle Idol artefact type were ‘hut-symbols’ or representations of religious structures such as temples, with the eye like protrusions at the top representations of reed bundles often associated with the complexes dedicated to the later Goddess Inanna.

Mallowan in his Tell Brak excavations also classified these as ‘Cult Symbols’, but created the label Spectacle Idols for them in his 1947 report, a name that has continued in use. Mallowan linked the Spectacle Idols to the Eye-Idol artefacts. The term ‘spectacle’ was chosen as the eye section is perforated, and this link to glasses and the eyes of the Eye-Idols would begin this direct connection between both artefact types. Mallowan did not fully agree with Andrea’s ‘hut-symbol’ explanation, but deemed it probable enough to apply it to his finds, and by association linked the Spectacle Idols to the Eye-Idols as a related artefact type, but deeming the Eye-Idols a higher quality and later version, which served a votive cult that evolved from the earlier Spectacle Idol artefacts.

The next major publication that heavily focussed on Eye-Idols and Spectacle Idols was ‘Ishtar at Troy’ by H. Frankfort. In terms of better understanding the development of literature regarding the artefact type this text is valuable, as not only does it put forward new theories regarding origins and meaning, but it continues to show this tendency of directly linking the artefact types together. Frankfort agreed with Walter Andrae’s ‘Hut Symbol’ theory but refined it to be applied to higher quality stone examples, whilst theorising that the hollow terracotta Spectacle Idols are more utilitarian in function, perhaps being examples of pot covers, in the

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73 Bréniquet 1996; Yaylali 2014.
74 Bielińska 2016.
75 Speiser 1928.
76 Speiser 1935.
77 Speiser 1935, 1928; Bache 1936.
78 Speiser 1935, 1928; Bache 1936.
79 Andrae 1933.
80 Andrae 1933.
81 Mallowan 1947, 154-155.
82 Frankfort 1949, 194-195.
83 Frankfort 1949, 194-195.
form of a divine female image\textsuperscript{84}. The perforated eyes may have served for string to pass through or secure the top to the pot. He saw the Idols in the later Tell Brak cache as less functional but more potent in religious meaning, such as a goddess and her shrine\textsuperscript{85}. Critically this text is extremely inaccurate, the evidence widely unsupported and the chronology is incorrect. Another major criticism is that Frankfort attempts to link all visually similar artefacts from numerous sites\textsuperscript{86} disregarding contextual and chronological realities to convey that shared features indicate a wider typology for artefacts that in no way can be geographically linked.

The 1950s and 1960s saw an increase in writing surrounding the Eye-Idols and Spectacle Idols, Elizabeth Douglas van Buren in her 1950 text ‘Amulets, Symbols and Idols’, like previous authors, praises Andrae’s ‘hut-symbol’ theory\textsuperscript{87}, and Mallowan’s interpretation of Eye-Idols\textsuperscript{88}. But she goes further to identify the divinity linked with the Eye-Idol and Spectacle Idols as an early form of Ishtar or a deity linked to fertility. Van Buren recognised the limitations of this theory and admits there is no proof of it being a male or female divinity\textsuperscript{89}. This claim of a fertility based deity became common across early literature when a clear explanation of the artefacts was not present. This view is widely unsupported as the artefact type has no visual indicators of gender, sexuality or fertile potency. Van Buren in her 1955 text ‘New Evidence Concerning an Eye-Divinity’\textsuperscript{90} continued to theorise the link these Idols had with a wider regional deity linked to fertility and embodied by the eye symbol\textsuperscript{91}. In doing so she referenced heavily the work of Margarete Riemschneider who strongly advocated the theory of a shared eye-divinity linked to fertility\textsuperscript{92}. In this text Van Buren also looks more closely at the headwear and chest designs in a way that was overlooked in previous texts since 1947\textsuperscript{93}, and she built upon some of the theories presented by Mallowan. She theorised that the designs on the Brak examples were stylised depictions of clothing. She suggested that Eye-Idols with smaller idols on the chest of the larger indicated they represented a female deity, and that larger specimens and the capped figures with tall, pointed ornate headwear represented males\textsuperscript{94}.

Dr Margarete Reimschneider in her text 1953 ‘The Eye God’\textsuperscript{95} theorised that there was a shared deity, the ‘Eye-God’, in the ancient Near East embodied by the stylistic eye symbol across artefacts like the Spectacle Idol and the Eye-Idols. She observed that the Brak examples show a stylised and abstract representation of the Eye divinity with the headwear and chest designs of the Eye-Idols being embellished representations of the

\textsuperscript{84} Frankfort 1949, 194-195.
\textsuperscript{85} Frankfort 1949, 195-197.
\textsuperscript{86} Frankfort 1949, 197-198.
\textsuperscript{87} Tell Brak, Tepe Gawra, Tell Agrab, Ur, Tell Asmar, Northern Syria, Tell Brak, Grai Resh, Hama, Thermi, Troy and Kültepe.
\textsuperscript{88} Tepe Gawra, Tell Agrab, Ur, Tell Asmar, Northern Syria, Tell Brak, Grai Resh, Hama, Thermi.
\textsuperscript{89} Van Buren 1950.
\textsuperscript{90} Mallowan 1947, 151-153.
\textsuperscript{91} Van Buren 1950.
\textsuperscript{92} Van Buren 1955.
\textsuperscript{93} Mallowan 1947.
\textsuperscript{94} Van Buren 1955, 166-168.
\textsuperscript{95} Riemschneider 1953.
divinity. This view was further theorised by O.G.S Crawford in his 1957 text ‘The Eye Goddess’ in which he explores international examples and Near Eastern artefacts with exaggerated eyes, such as the Spectacle Idols, and more specifically the Eye-Idols, linking them altogether as representations of a universal belief system dedicated to a fertility deity which he calls the ‘Eye Goddess’. Tell Brak Eye-Idols being present in such a wide number of visual variations, he further theorised they could represent a linked theophany or divine family group related to this divinity. Both these views are widely unsubstantiated, with poor use of linked artefact based and contextual evidence, but both these texts represent a thematic trend that exists in the Eye-Idol literature.

Beatrice Laura Goff, although not a major writer on the topic of Eye-Idols, presented in her 1963 text ‘Symbols of Prehistoric Mesopotamia’ a unique viewpoint that since the Tell Brak Eye-Idols have the feature of not being able to stand upright unaided, this could indicate that they may have been worn as ornament, perhaps as a protective charm or amulet upon a necklace. Although speculative, this could account for the small number of artefacts that have intentional perforations, although her lack of comparative evidence makes this difficult to support.

Mallowan’s later writings on the artefact type never tended to vary beyond the conclusions of his original report, with no notable revision of his theories. The only development to Mallowan’s original 1947 conclusions is that in his 1969 book section titled ‘Alabaster Eye-Idols from Tell Brak, North Syria’. In this text, he theorised that the visual similarities between the multiple Eye-Idol examples from Tell Brak (Figures 3.1-3.18) and the clay and stone figures found at Kültepe were significant. He used this to suggest that there may have been significant cultural links between sites in southern Anatolia and those in Northern Syria. He continued this view in his 1977 Book ‘Mallowan’s Memoirs’ although in less detail.

During the 1970s Eye-Idols appear less in the literature, perhaps due to the lack of new evidence. The next most notable edition to the literature is the 1986 unpublished dissertation ‘A Technical Study of the Eye-Idols from Tell Brak’ by Timothy Matney. Although the text does not focus on the function and meaning of the Tell Brak Eye-Idols in depth, and even less discussion is given to the Spectacle Idols, the thesis is nevertheless highly comprehensive in its exploration of the artefact type in a way not seen since Mallowan’s 1947 report. The value of this text lies in the scientific analysis of the material of the Idols, the breakage patterns and the

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96 Riemschneider 1953.
97 O.G.S 1957, 42-49.
98 O.G.S 1957, 427-49.
99 O.G.S 1957, 43-44.
100 Goff 1963, 150-155.
101 Goff 1963.
103 Mallowan 1969.
104 Mallowan 1969, 395-396.
105 Mallowan 1977.
106 Matney 1986.
colour variations that exist\textsuperscript{107}, all aspects that have never been systematically addressed in relation to the artefact type and which add greatly to the corpus of knowledge. Statistics are also utilised to try and form meaningful patterns, but no significant conclusions were achieved. However, the attempt nevertheless is important to better understand the frequency of materials utilised in the production of Eye-Idols, the general conditions the Eye-Idols are found in and the frequency of chest designs and headwear\textsuperscript{108}. Although no major insights were gained through this exercise the application of such techniques add greatly to the study of the Tell Brak Eye-Idols.

Gradually the literature regarding the Eye-Idols has continued to change towards a more scientific and data based direction. This can be seen in reports from the excavations and site surveys resumed at Tell Brak from 1976 to 2007\textsuperscript{109}. These reports are spread across a wide time period, but overall the majority are not focussed on the Eye-Idols or the Eye-Temple. However, in a small number of reports\textsuperscript{110} the new and highly valuable finds at Tell Brak of Eye-Idols found outside the Grey Eye-Temple complex are recorded\textsuperscript{111}. In 1999, at the site of Hamoukar, excavations also revealed important discoveries of the first confirmed Eye-Idols found outside Tell Brak\textsuperscript{112}. The reports of these excavations, much like those for Tell Brak, do not focus on the meaning, function and design of the Eye-Idols found, but instead report more scientifically on the stratigraphic location and chronology of the finds. These small caches of artefacts found at Tell Brak and Hamoukar, coupled with developments in chronology across northern Syria allowed for a redating of the Eye-Temple and the Eye-Idols from the Jemdet Nasr period to the Northern Middle Uruk\textsuperscript{113}. These excavation reports mark a major addition to knowledge about the artefact type and to the literature, with the best explanation of the significance of this redating being clearly explained in the Essay Collection ‘Leaving No Stone Unturned’ by Joan and David Oates, the long-term excavation directors at Tell Brak\textsuperscript{114}.

With the previously mentioned chronological developments, and excavations occurring at a larger number of northern Mesopotamian sites\textsuperscript{115}, some new explanations as to the function of the Eye-Idols and Spectacle Idols emerged. This is first seen in the in-depth study of Eye-Idols and Spectacle Idols by C. Bréniquet in her 1996

\textsuperscript{107}Matney 1986, 17-21.
\textsuperscript{108}Matney 1986, 22-38.
\textsuperscript{111}Emberling et al. 1999; Oates and Oates 1993; Emberling and McDonald 2003. Specifically, the small cache of 4 fragmentary Eye-Idols found in 1992-93 in Area TW in rooms 1 and 3 of a Level 16 structure, 2 broken Eye-Idols found in 1998 in area TW B in the West Pit, and finally in 2001-2002 in the western trench also in area TW in a level 18 structure a single bone Idol was found in a jar.
\textsuperscript{112}Clemens 2009, 2002; McGuire Gibson, Sanders, and Carrie Hritz 2002; Gibson 2000; Gibson and Maktash 2000. 4 fragmentary bone examples found in Area B in a pit, the single example found in a below floor infant burial in Area B, and the nearby broken stone Eye-Idol found in the same context below the floor level.
\textsuperscript{113}Oates and Oates 2002.
\textsuperscript{114}Oates and Oates 2002.
\textsuperscript{115}Gibson 2000; Oates and Oates 2002; Yaylali 2014.
article\textsuperscript{116} in which she explores Spectacle Idols and Eye-Idols as a single related group, emphasising the anthropomorphised qualities of Eye-Idols linking them with women via chest designs as representing clothing and headwear as hairstyles\textsuperscript{117}. She classifies the Spectacle Idols as functional tools used in weaving thread, a task also associated with women\textsuperscript{118}. Anne Porter in her 2014 book ‘Mobile Pastoralism and the Formation of Near Eastern Civilizations; Weaving Together Society’\textsuperscript{119} builds on Bréniquet’s initial weaving theory, but more adequately explains its relationship to the Tell Brak and Hamoukar Eye-Idols\textsuperscript{120}. Porter discusses the shift from flax weaving to wool weaving during the Uruk period in upper Mesopotamia, noting that spindle whorls and loom weights found in Uruk level strata in Area CH indicate that wool and flax were present in significant quantities at the site of Tell Brak\textsuperscript{121}. She further links the stone and clay Spectacle Idols found at numerous sites across northern Mesopotamia and specifically Tell Brak, as tools used in the spinning or dying of textiles as presented by Bréniquet\textsuperscript{122}. But Porter goes a step further, theorising that although the Eye-Idols are less functional in design compared with Spectacle Idols, they are intrinsically connected as a more stylised and abstract representation: “It is possible spinners transformed some kind of ontological/anthropomorphizing statement, or their adherence to a divine entity, into an object that lay at the heart of their work\textsuperscript{123}”.

The discovery of new Eye-Idols at Hamoukar and at Tell Brak, and the revision of the related chronology saw a minor resurgence in writing about Eye-Idols, with a focus upon the imagery of the eye in Near Eastern art and artefacts. Particularly notable examples are Ben Watson’s 2011 article ‘The Eyes Have it: Human Perception and Anthropomorphic Faces in World Rock Art’\textsuperscript{124} and the 2014 article ‘The Superstitious Mystery Behind the Eye: The Symbol of Eye and the Way that the Evil Eye Bead is Reflected in Turkish Society from the Ancient History to the Present’\textsuperscript{125}. Individually these texts do not have any significant impact on the study of the Eye-Idols, but they do reveal the changing direction of the literature in the last decade to once again exploring the meaning of the prominent eye symbol across Near Eastern art, and the subsequent value of the Eye-Idols and Spectacle Idols to this exploration.

The final notable development in the literature of Eye-Idols is in the much broader discussion of the development of urbanism and urbanisation in Northern Mesopotamia, where the artefact type and its context have become only minor evidence in a much broader theory\textsuperscript{126}. With more recent views observing that urban development grew independently in the north before contact with southern Mesopotamia, Tell Brak being

\textsuperscript{116} Bréniquet 1996.
\textsuperscript{117} Bréniquet 1996, 34-35.
\textsuperscript{118} Bréniquet 1996, 40-43.
\textsuperscript{119} Porter 2014.
\textsuperscript{120} Porter 2014, 113-115.
\textsuperscript{121} Porter 2014, 114.
\textsuperscript{122} Porter 2014, 114.
\textsuperscript{123} Porter 2014, 115.
\textsuperscript{124} Watson 2011.
\textsuperscript{125} KOÇ and TEMÜR 2014.
\textsuperscript{126} Oates 1997; Smith, Ur, and Feinman 2014.
used as a major source for this discussion. This topic has been consistently discussed from the mid 1990s onwards, and although the Eye-Idols are utilised as evidence by these authors, they are only ever of minor importance. Although all sources cannot be discussed there are some prominent texts, like ‘An Open Gate: Cities of the Fourth Millennium BC’ by Joan and David Oates[^127], Geoff Emberlings highly comprehensive ‘Political Control in the Early State: The Eye Temple and the Uruk Expansion in Northern Mesopotamia’[^128] in which he investigates the Eye-Idol artefact type and the Eye-Temple through urban development at the site of Tell Brak and aspects of his views of the Uruk Expansion[^129]. Other more recent texts include Jason Ur’s 2011 article ‘Cycles of Civilization in Northern Mesopotamia, 4400—2000 BC’[^130], and Gil J Stein’s study ‘The Development of Indigenous Social Complexity In Late Chalcolithic Upper Mesopotamia In the 5th-4th Millennia BC - An Initial Assessment’[^131] within which the transition to urbanism in northern Mesopotamia is explored through the utilisation of evidence such as the Eye-Idols from Tell Brak and Hamoukar, and the Spectacle Idols from Hacinebi and Tepe Gawra to support views of trade and connection between the sites, as well as shared belief systems in the region[^132].

Overall it can be observed that there is not a huge collection of sources that explore the artefact type in a comprehensive manner, with sources tending to follow a thematic approach to the artefacts, either iconographic or scientific, and with most texts focussing on a single aspect or theory. There are even less examples that focus primarily upon the artefact type and add significantly to the discussion and investigation of the artefacts. Therefore, this thesis attempts to fill a gap in the literature, by bringing together all aspects and facets of existing research about the Eye-Idols in a coherent and cohesive fashion to broaden the understanding of their context, materiality, meaning and functionality, their links to Spectacle Idols, and add to the academic discourse that surrounds the Eye-Idols.

[^130]: Ur 2010.
[^131]: Stein 2012.
[^132]: Stein 2012, 138-140.
Methodology

For this thesis, excavation reports, scholarly articles and published texts have been the major sources of information. But to gather strong physical evidence of the Eye-Idols, online and printed Museum catalogues have been utilised to support the wider discussion and investigation of the artefact type. Also, to go beyond the overall reliance on examples of legacy data, a small study of the Eye-Idol collection at the Nicholson Museum at the University of Sydney has been undertaken to add new insights.

The original 1947 report, and the later writings of Mallowan, record the excavation of “thousands” of intact and fragmentary Eye-Idols at Tell Brak. But despite extensive research, the number of true Eye-Idols that can be accurately and reliably sourced is just over 120. It is not known for sure where the majority of these artefacts have ended up today since the original 1937 and 1938 excavations. Mallowan recorded the artefacts being split between the Aleppo Museum and the British Museum. He also noted a small amount being loaned to smaller collections such as the London Institute of Archaeology, the Ashmolean Museum and the Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology at Cambridge. It has become a common practice for international Museums to share collections and it is highly likely that numerous museums have a small collection of the Eye-Idols. But since not all collections have been digitised, and it has been impossible to research accurately the current collections in the Syrian and Iraqi Museums it must be hopefully assumed that these artefacts must be there, but at this point in time it cannot be confirmed without actually visiting. As a result of this small data set the decision to not create a data base and undertake extensive statistical examination was made. The small data set means that any results produced during a statistical examination would not be meaningful, as they would not be an adequate representation of the entire class of artefacts. So, the choice was made to examine and investigate the artefact type through iconographic analysis, and through an in-depth examination and revision of the existing literature, as well as undertake an in-depth exploration of the Nicholson Museum’s Eye-Idol collection obtained in the 1950s and 1960s through the Archaeological Institute of London, and donations (Appendix 2: Nicholson Museum Eye-Idol Catalogue).

An exploration of the archaeological context of the Eye-Idols at Tell Brak has been undertaken through study of the site during the 4th Millennium BCE, and by focussing on the specific find spot of the Eye-Idols within Eye Temple strata. The site of Hamoukar, specifically Area B, the second known find spot for Eye-Idols has also been considered. This has been done to better understand the artefact type, as well as to place it within

134 Mallowan 1947, 89-90.
135 Mallowan 1947,89.
the wider regional context of 4th Millennium BCE northern Mesopotamia. The primary motivation behind this is to place the artefact type in a more specific period, and ensure a more accurate date for the artefacts, as understanding the origins of evidence is essential for understanding its likely function and meaning. Whilst looking at context an investigation surrounding the issue of accurately dating the Eye-Idols is undertaken, as well as an acknowledgment of the lack of consistency in dates in the academic sources, and the issues that initial scholars had in their dating and chronologies. To achieve a more precise chronology for the artefacts and a better understanding of their context, the reports from the most recent excavations and surveys at the Tell Brak and Hamoukar, and the most modern academic writings are utilised over the earlier scholarly works. This provides a more reliable framework from which the artefact type and other significant evidence at Tell Brak and at other sites can be investigated.

The study of artefact types is often accompanied by the creation of typologies to better organise and understand them both characteristically and chronologically. Eye-Idols have also been explored via typological frameworks, originally by Mallowan138 and later by Timothy Matney139 and Catherine Bréniquet 140. After examining these previous typologies, it became apparent that although each framework had value, they weren’t effective enough to adequately explore the artefact type. So, within this thesis a new typological framework adapted from the already existing range of typologies has been created, to form a more valuable, useful and encompassing look at the artefact type. Through this typology, a more in-depth look at the structure and designs of the Eye-Idols in terms of chest patterns and headwear is explored and interpreted. This developed typology is utilised to explain and organise the characteristics of the artefact type via the types and sub-groups created for the Eye-Idols. Via the typology, the corpus of artefacts gathered for the study can be more effectively used by the reader. The choice to explore the Eye-Idols via the creation of this new typological framework will ensure internal consistency and is a step towards answering the chief question of the function and meaning of the Eye-Idols within the society of Tell Brak and within Northern Mesopotamian society in the 4th Millennium BCE.

The choice to go beyond the legacy data that has been relied upon for this study and for previous studies of the artefact type was made in the creation of this thesis, as adding to the archaeological data and discourse is just as valuable as judging and investigating previous studies by others. The importance of going beyond the written word was achieved through undertaking actual hands on research in the form of a mini study of the Nicholson Museum’s Eye-Idol collection. Relying upon photos and the descriptions of others became limiting, and as the aim of the overall study is to better understand Eye-Idols the choice was made to explore the artefact

138 Mallowan 1947.
139 Matney 1986.
140 Bréniquet 1996
type hands on. Rather than simply look at the online catalogue of the Museum, the entire display and stored catalogue of intact and fragmentary Eye-Idols were observed from all angles, rephotographed and remeasured. This mini study was done to better understand wear patterns and the function of the artefact type, and to support and complement the findings, explanations and conclusions of this study, as well as add any new insights to the information that surrounds the artefact type. Normal photography has been used to document the corpus of artefacts, with filters to more effectively enhance less defined designs and marks. Observing the Eye-Idols from all angles is viewed as significant as the sides and backs of the Eye-Idols are commonly ignored by researchers. It has been discovered through this study that these angles of the artefacts are also significant.

With an Honours thesis, there are time and financial limitations. It was not possible to travel overseas within the space of a year, and visit the necessary number of museum collections needed to manually trace more Eye-Idols. This is particularly true in the Middle East where much of these artefacts likely are. But through contacting numerous museum collections\textsuperscript{141}, and the individuals that have worked on the past excavations at Tell Brak such as Geoff Emberling\textsuperscript{142}, Timothy Matney and Henry Wright, some relevant unpublished sources\textsuperscript{143} and a small amount of evidence have been gained which have greatly added to the study of the artefact type. But it must be noted that one of the most useful sources ‘The Excavations at Tell Brak 3: The Uruk and ‘Ubaid Periods’ by Joan Oates is yet to be published. It is highly likely that much of the unpublished evidence, most recent conclusions and perhaps even a catalogue of Eye-Idols from the site maybe present within this important text but cannot be accessed for this study. Thus, the limitations of this study must be acknowledged and embraced as with the publishing of this new text in the future the conclusions and discussions presented in this thesis may be proven incorrect.

\textsuperscript{142} Emberling 2002; Emberling and McDonald 2001; Emberling et al. 1999
\textsuperscript{143} Matney 1986, 7-8.
The Eye-Idols

General Description of the Eye-Idol

The Eye-Idol artefact type is very distinct in style and iconography, and can have numerous variations in material, size and design. But in general, the common features that truly define and identify the artefact type is that they have a flat oblong body with no limbs or identifiable features of gender.\textsuperscript{144} The body tapers in gradually at the top towards what can be interpreted as a neck or stem upon which sits a set or sets of large eyes.

The eyes are carved with heavy upper and lower eye-lids, bulging orbits and deeply carved pupils; above the eyes sits a single deeply carved and accentuated joined eyebrow (Figure 1). The bottom and top lids connect at where the bridge of the nose on a human face would likely be\textsuperscript{145}, but in the absence of a nose or any other facial feature instead forms a figure eight shape enclosing the eyeballs\textsuperscript{146}. The lack of any further facial features or identifiable limbs makes the eyes the most notable and prominent feature\textsuperscript{147}.

Overall in studying the eye-idols closely the subtle variations and lack of uniformity across such features like eye size and style, the thickness of the neck and body, and the non-symmetrical nature of the idols indicates that the manufacturing process was not finalised and perfected. To more accurately study the artefact type (Figure 1) was created as a part of this study which compiles the major eye set configurations and shows this clearly, and although variation is obvious, it is extremely clear to the viewer that there is a definite stylistic regulation present\textsuperscript{148}.

Another feature that defines the artefact type is linked to how it may have been displayed and its overall stance. The oblong body of the artefact type comes in a range of heights spanning 2cm-13cm, with the most common height being 4-5cm. The artefacts are overall relatively small, and they are also very thin in terms of depth, with the majority being below 1cm\textsuperscript{149}. This characteristic means that they are generally unable to stand upright easily. Mallowan first suggested that this feature might indicate that the Eye-Idols had been mounted upright in stands within the Eye Temple or held by devotees\textsuperscript{150}, but Elizabeth Douglas Van Buren\textsuperscript{151} theorised that this feature denotes that they were intended to be laid flat and only viewed from the front.

\textsuperscript{144} Matney 1986, 5-6.
\textsuperscript{145} Bréniquet 1996, 33-34.
\textsuperscript{146} Cooper 2015, 2.
\textsuperscript{147} Watson 2011; Mallowan 1947; Van Buren 1955; Bréniquet 1996
\textsuperscript{148} Van Buren 1955.
\textsuperscript{149} Bréniquet 1996, 33-34; Yaylali 2014, 3-4.
\textsuperscript{150} Mallowan 1947, 151, 204-205.
\textsuperscript{151} Van Buren 1950, 1955
As these viewpoints are not well supported in terms of evidence, the display of the Eye-Idols remains widely debated, and will be discussed further with some new insights in the in-depth study of the Nicholson Museum Eye Idol collection.

Beyond the prominent eye feature, the incised patterns in the form of chest designs and headwear also set the artefact type apart and emphasise its unique qualities. Chest designs appear in quite a variety (Figures 2-3), usually involving groups of zig-zag patterns or undulating lines. There are also examples of rows of dots and groups of vertical striations. The most common, and possibly significant, aspect of the design is the ‘V’ carved at the base of the neck which is likely indicative of a neck piece or the neckline of a garment, perhaps like a cloak (Figures 1.3-1.7). The exact meaning and significance of these designs is unknown, and the range of theories\textsuperscript{152} will be discussed in-depth in a later section. Headwear is also as equally diverse (Figure 4) within the artefact type, overall, structurally, styles tend to be crown-like, triangular with horizontal lines, conical or ovoid, with a very small minority being extremely ornate as can be seen from (Figure 2.20-2.21)\textsuperscript{153}.

**Material**

**Stone**

A small number of Eye-Idols are made of limestone indigenous to Syria, but overall the majority of Eye-Idols are made of alabaster or what is often called in early literature ‘Mosul Marble’\textsuperscript{154}, technically not marble, but a fine-grained Gypsum. Gypsum is a hydrated calcium sulphate and a very common stone, naturally coming in a variety of colours ranging from a transparent white and yellow to grey, and all the way to darker brown tones\textsuperscript{155}. Being naturally quite porous the stone is susceptible to colour changes brought on by numerous factors such as deposition, water seepage and burning\textsuperscript{156}. The fact that most of the artefact examples are made of stone indicates not only their high value and significance, but that their manufacture would require extremely skilled craftspeople, to carve an artefact as small and delicate as the Eye-Idols\textsuperscript{157}. This would indicate a developed craft economy at Tell Brak during the mid-4\textsuperscript{th} Millennium BCE as it was likely that these items were not made by the average worshipper, but likely had to be sourced from professional specialists. Evidence of what may have been lithic based workshops in Area TW in levels 20 and 19 identified via stone debris support this hypothesis\textsuperscript{158}.

\textsuperscript{152} Mallowan 1977; Mallowan 1969
\textsuperscript{153} Mallowan 1965, 1956, 1947
\textsuperscript{154} Mallowan 1969; Van Buren 1950.
\textsuperscript{155} Matney 1986, 6-7.
\textsuperscript{156} This is widely discussed in the Nicholson Museum mini-study of the Eye-Idol artefact type in (section?).
\textsuperscript{157} Mallowan 1947, 199-200.
\textsuperscript{158} Emberling and McDonald 2003
Bone

It was noted by Mallowan and other academics that bone Eye-Idols existed, but over time all previous examples were proven not to be bone, but porous and soft white gypsums. Professor Timothy Matney conducted the only other major study of the Eye-Idols in the 1980s and at this point in time there was only one known bone example of an Eye-Idol in the Ashmolean Museum collections the provenance of which was not confirmed. This has since changed and it is now confirmed that animal bone was utilised as a material in the creation of Eye-Idols at Tell Brak and Tell Hamoukar (Figures 1.31, 1.39 and 1.40). The choice of this material is perhaps because the creamy colouration is reminiscent of alabaster, and in terms of shaping it is reasonably easy to carve, and readily available. During excavations in 2001-2002 at Tell Brak a head section of a bone Eye-Idol 1.95cm in height was discovered in the contents of a jar in area TW contemporary with the main cache find-spot in the grey-brick stratum of the Eye Temple (Figure 1.39). Bone Eye-Idols have also been found at Hamoukar during excavations in 1999-2000 with an intact example found in what is believed to be the grave of an infant in Area B (Figure 1.31), as well as four partial examples in a cache of beads and seals in Area B (Figure 1.40).

Clay

Mallowan claimed that Eye-Idols were also made of clay, such as the example now located in the British Museum BM 126235 (Figure 1.12). He also suggested that the darker examples were burnt clay, intentionally burnt to produce the dark colouration. Although not entirely implausible, all examples claimed to be clay have been reviewed and are in fact dark gypsum examples, some of which may have been burnt to achieve a darker colouration. Throughout this study it has not been possible to locate any true clay examples that can be considered Eye-Idols. Rather, the related clay examples are not actually Eye-Idols, but are instead Spectacle Idols (Figure 4.17-4.32) as shall be later explored. So, it must be concluded at this point in time that without further evidence clay was not a material utilised in the creation of the Eye-Idol artefact type.

159 Matney 1986, 6.
160 McGuire Gibson, Sanders, and Carrie Hritz 2002; Gibson 2000
161 Emberling and McDonald 2003
162 McGuire Gibson, Sanders, and Carrie Hritz 2002
163 Mallowan 1947, 154.
164 Matney 1986, 7.
165 Matney 1986, 6.
The Painting or Infilling of the Eyes

The deeply incised set or sets of eyes of the artefacts indicates they were likely the intentional focal point of the artefact type. This intentional emphasis can be seen in the pupils, orbits and lids all carved with deeper and thicker lines then other carved aspects upon the Eye-Idols. This technique was utilised to enhance the attention grabbing and hypnotic impact of the feature. Scientific testing upon the Eye-Idol artefact type revealed that this intention to further emphasise the eyes of the artefacts was achieved by infilling or painting the eye section. This scientific test took place in 1986, conducted by Timothy Matney and Dr Nigel Seeley. Through the utilisation of X-ray diffraction, it was discovered that samples of burnt vaterite, which is a form of calcite of volcanic origin, was found in the eye sections, a feature that would only be present if intentionally added. It was theorised that this material made up a base to which natural pigments such as malachite, ochre, carbon and iron oxides were added with water to form a plaster like paste, then utilised to fill the eyes. These pigments were probably the examples used to achieve the wide range of colours such as green, black and dark red that Mallowan claims to have observed. This technique of emphasising the eye not only through size but also colouration is a common technique which spans northern and southern Mesopotamia. The much later example of the Tell Asmar Hoard statues (Figure 5.4) show that the Tell Brak artefact type, although unique in design to Tell Brak, clearly fits into a wider and longer artistic tradition, indicative of shared techniques and practices across the region, and perhaps even a shared belief system that emphasised the importance and meaning of the human eye.

Eye-Idol 126202 from the British Museum collection (Figure 1.9) has been recorded by the museum, and across innumerable academic sources as strong surviving evidence of an Eye-Idol having the eyes and eyebrows in-filled with a malachite based paint. In the original excavation report published in 1947, Mallowan notes that out of curiosity he infilled the eyes himself with “modern black paint to give the original appearance.” Therefore this artefact is not actually a surviving example of an Eye-Idol with its original eye paint, but instead an imitation. This fact does not appear to be widely known, or in many cases noted, even by the British Museum or more widely by academics. In most cases the artefact has been used as evidence, probably in the belief that it is in its original state. This discovery is significant as it highlights the importance and difficulty of accurately understanding Eye-Idols. It also highlights the importance of provenance and the history of each individual Eye-Idol example.

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166 Watson 2011, 91-92
167 Matney 1986, 22.
168 Matney 1986, 23.
169 Mallowan 1947, 150-151.
172 Mallowan 1947, 154.
173 Collon 1995, 47.
The Context of the Eye-Idols

Introduction

This Thesis is not focussed upon exploring comprehensively the two sites of Tell Brak\textsuperscript{174} and Hamoukar\textsuperscript{175}. Instead the specific find locations and related stratigraphy of the Eye-Idols at each site form the primary focus. The decision to explore the chronology of the artefact type is due to the recognition that theoretical, iconographic and iconological exploration of Eye-Idols alone can only reveal so much about the artefact type. Therefore, with the artefact type only known to have come from these two sites, a coherent understanding of the geographical, stratigraphical and chronological context is important to understanding the artefact type. This section aims to add insights into the function and meaning of the artefacts, as well as, to a lesser extent, the society within which they existed, as to understand their journey from discard to deposition and to excavation is valuable in forming a comprehensive understanding of the artefact type.

Tell Brak

Eye Idols are predominantly found in the site of Tell Brak, one of the largest known sites within the upper Khabur Basin in North-Eastern Syria, located on the Jaghjagh river (Figure 5.8). The site comprises the central Tell and smaller dense surrounding settlements\textsuperscript{176}. Tell Brak has come to be considered by scholars and academics in more recent decades as one of the most significant and earliest known urban centres in Northern Mesopotamia\textsuperscript{177}. The main mound of the site is over 40m in height and spans over 800 x 600m in overall area\textsuperscript{178}. It is stratigraphically rich, being one of the largest Tell sites in the Near East. Tell Brak was occupied continuously from at least the 6\textsuperscript{th} millennium BCE to the end of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} millennium BCE, with the site reaching major urban scale and complexity by the late 5\textsuperscript{th} and into the early 4th millennium BC\textsuperscript{179}. This is particularly evident from areas of the site such as TW and CH\textsuperscript{180}. Tell Brak is positioned in a significant location, being situated on one of the major trade routes of the region, linking it on an East-West axis to Assyria and the Levant, and on a north-west axis to Southern Mesopotamia and Anatolia\textsuperscript{181}.

\textsuperscript{174} Mallowan 1947, 38-39  
\textsuperscript{175} McGuire Gibson, Sanders, and Carrie Hritz 2002; Gibson 2000; Gibson and Maktash 2000.  
\textsuperscript{176} McMahon 2009.  
\textsuperscript{177} Stein 2012; Oates 1997; Emberling 2003.  
\textsuperscript{178} Emberling and Macdonald 2003.  
\textsuperscript{179} Oates et al. 2007.  
\textsuperscript{180} Oates and Oates 1994; Emberling et al. 1999; Oates 1997.  
\textsuperscript{181} Soltysiak 2015.
The Eye-Temple at Tell Brak

At Tell Brak during the 1937 and 1938 spring excavations the largest cache of artefacts was excavated at what was later labelled the ‘Eye-Temple’, the primary find spot of the Eye-Idol artefact type. The Eye Temple platform that makes up the total Eye Temple complex is not a singular structure, but instead is made up of at least four separate strata, each probably being a temple. After the abandonment and perhaps destruction of each temple, the structure was tightly packed in with mud-bricks forming a platform upon which the next temple phase was built. Within each phase artefacts were left in-situ, or perhaps placed in during the filling process, with the majority found deposited in this manner, accounting for the broken and fragmentary nature of several objects.

The entire Eye-Temple stratigraphy is approximately 6m thick, with 3m of upper walls. The latest level of the structure is the highest point within the site, and visually dominates the site and countryside, indicating the symbolic importance of the structure, and by association the Eye-Idols themselves. The grey-brick stratum is approximately 5m below the floor of the upper temple. The Eye Temple levels were honeycombed with tunnels left by looters. When excavations began by M.E.L Mallowan the previously dug tunnels were utilised by excavators, and reinforced to reach these lower levels without causing more destruction to the stratigraphy. In the lowest levels of these tunnels it was recorded by Mallowan that a small number of Eye-Idols were excavated from within and between the brickwork as the excavators progressed through shaft 1, although which specific artefacts was not recorded. Many of these objects were also found amidst the cleared debris from looting, the smaller stone artefacts, many of which were fragmentary left behind as not of high value.

Stratigraphy of the Eye Temple at Tell Brak

1. **Eye-Temple**: This uppermost stratum was excavated entirely by M.E.L Mallowan in the 1937 and 1938 spring seasons, and there remains three metres of walls at this level. The layout of the upper temple platform can be deemed as tripartite, consisting of a buttressed façade, inner core that is a long chamber, flanked by smaller chambers upon each side, and at the far end of the large chamber a stone podium. (Figure 5.9) This layout seen at similar structures at Tell

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182 Thousands of Eye-Idols, along with animal figurines, stamp and cylinder seals, and hundreds of thousands of beads.
183 Mallowan 1947, 38-39
184 This issue of breakage is further discussed in the Nicholson Mini-Study.
185 Emberling 2002, 85-86.
186 Mallowan 1947, 34-36.
187 Emberling 2002, 84.
Uqair and Warka\textsuperscript{188}. Very little archaeological evidence was found in this section due to looting in later antiquity. Surrounding this podium on three sides was a wall frieze of white and grey limestone, bitumen and gold. Here there was also found a partial fragment of copper panelling with incised eye designs, as well as a fragmentary stone eye-socket which was found in front of the podium upon the floor. It can therefore be assumed that this icon may have stood on this podium, indicating that this later temple structure, like its predecessors, was still devoted to the worship of an unknown deity directly associated with this eye imagery\textsuperscript{189}. The lower earlier levels such as the Grey Eye-Temple stratum mirrored a similar layout to the later Eye-Temple structures, as below what has been called galleries 7-8 the largest numbers of amulets, objects and eye-idols were located\textsuperscript{190}. Work in the mid to late 1990s in area CH 70m east by David Oates revealed that this complex was probably surrounded by a large wall enclosing the Temple\textsuperscript{191}.

2. **White Eye-Temple**: The remnants of this strata are a thin layer of white plastered floor and a layer of red mud-brick walls used as infill, approximately four metres thick\textsuperscript{192}.

3. **Grey Eye-Temple**: This stratum is approximately 60cm thick, and is the primary find spot of thousands of Eye-Idols, from which the entire structure is named. The artefacts were found both under and in many cases mixed into the mortar and brickwork filling the temple, making it highly likely that as artefacts they were a votive offering ritually discarded as a deposit to an unspecified Eye divinity\textsuperscript{193}. Beyond the cache of beads, amulets and stele there were also founded deposited sculpted stone heads which also feature large accentuated eyes. This form of deposition is also noted in Early Dynastic examples in the Diyala Region such as the Square Temple I, and the Nintu VI Temple\textsuperscript{194}.

4. **Red Eye-Temple**: This is the earliest level of the stratum, identifiable by a layer of red brick approximately 1 metre in thickness\textsuperscript{195}.

\textsuperscript{188} Emberling 2002, 85.
\textsuperscript{189} Mallowan 1947, 33.
\textsuperscript{190} Oates 1982, 87-88.
\textsuperscript{191} Oates and Oates 1991
\textsuperscript{192} Oates and Oates 1991
\textsuperscript{193} Emberling 2002, 82.
\textsuperscript{194} Delougaz et al. 1942, 89,180-181.
\textsuperscript{195} Matney 1986, 6.
Excavations at Tell Brak were reopened in 1976, and continued across the following decades at numerous points across the mound, but it was not until excavations in 1992 and 1993, undertaken by Joan and David Oates\textsuperscript{196} that the Eye-Idol artefact type was found again for the first time outside Grey Eye-Temple strata. This discovery proved to be highly significant, as the artefact type had never been found outside the Grey Eye-Temple complex before this stage\textsuperscript{197}. It was during these excavations within Area TW, in a Level 16 structure, probably a house that three fragmentary Single Eye-Idols were discovered in room 3 and room 1\textsuperscript{198}. During the 1998 excavations of the site under Geoff Emberling intensive focus was once again placed upon Area TW B. During the excavation of Building 16, a heavily burnt domestic structure with two large pits dated to the Middle to Late Uruk Period were excavated\textsuperscript{199}. It was in the West Pit that two broken Eye-Idol fragments were found\textsuperscript{200}, amongst numerous items such as beads, a clay tablet and a stone mace head\textsuperscript{201}.

In the 2001 and 2002 excavations, a further unique discovery was unearthed during the expansion of a western trench in area TW, of the Level 18 Building also called the ‘Niched Building’. This structure like the previously mentioned Building 16 was also heavily burnt, but has been linked instead to storage and to being a workshop as it contains large ovens, work areas and large storage jars\textsuperscript{202}. It was within one of these jars that a partial bone Idol was discovered (Figure 1.39)\textsuperscript{203}. This is the first known example of a bone Eye-Idol at Tell Brak, as examples of this type have only been found at Hamoukar\textsuperscript{204}.

**Hamoukar**

Tell Hamoukar, is in far North-Eastern Syria in the Jazira region near the border of Iraq. The site is considered another important 4\textsuperscript{th} Millennium urban centre of the region, although much smaller in size in comparison with Tell Brak. The site lies on an ancient trade route, and has been linked to obsidian trade and use with large amounts of the product being found, along with numerous manufacturing facilities. The distance between Tell Brak and Hamoukar is over 50km, but the known trade routes in the region and the closeness of each site to water courses make trade and contact between the sites extremely likely\textsuperscript{205}. The first excavations at Hamoukar occurred at the site in 1999 by a joint venture between the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, and

\textsuperscript{196} Oates and Oates 1993, 176.
\textsuperscript{197} Oates and Oates 1993, 176.
\textsuperscript{198} Oates and Oates 2002, 152-153.
\textsuperscript{199} Emberling et al. 1999, 6.
\textsuperscript{200} Emberling et al. 1999, 6,10.
\textsuperscript{201} Emberling et al. 1999, 6.
\textsuperscript{202} Emberling and McDonald 2003, 9,14.
\textsuperscript{203} Emberling and McDonald 2003, 9, 14.
\textsuperscript{204} Gibson and Maktash 2000, 58.
\textsuperscript{205} McGuire Gibson, Sanders, and Carrie Hritz 2002, 56-57.
the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities, and the success of this initial excavation led to later survey expeditions in 2001 and 2002\textsuperscript{206}, and larger excavations in 2005 and 2008\textsuperscript{207}.

Until 1999 Eye-Idols had only been found at Tell Brak, and it was generally accepted that the artefact type must be unique to the site. But during the excavations of Area B at Hamoukar Single Eye Idols and Decorated Single Eye Idols made of bone were uncovered (Figure 1.31 and 1.40)\textsuperscript{208}. The majority were found with a cache of bone beads, shells and stamp seals in a 60cm deep pit\textsuperscript{209}. Whilst the largest intact example 1 HM 105 was found as a part of a cache of objects in an infant grave located below the floor of a domestic structure also in Area B, nearby below the floor a fragmentary stone Eye-Idol was also found\textsuperscript{210}.

**Redating the Eye-Idols**

After the 1937 and 1938 excavations at Tell Brak M.E.L Mallowan associated the Jamdat Nasr Period to the Grey Eye-Temple and White-Eye Temple phases. Mallowan relied heavily upon dating parallels at the sites of Uruk and Khafaje to form his dates. “I have, however, adopted a date of c. 3000 BCE for the end of the Jamdat Nasr period, and in particular for the Eye Temple at Brak, not because I believe it to be necessarily accurate, but because it serves as a convenient yardstick”\textsuperscript{211}. But until some more accurate means of calculation can be devised, I am content to accept a date of c. 3000 B.C. for the end of the Jamdat Nasr period recognising that it may eventually be proved to be wrong by several centuries. It may, however, be hoped that another generation will eventually succeed in measuring” events in the third millennium B.C. as accurately as ours has measured them in the second\textsuperscript{212}. It is significant to note that Mallowan recognised that this date was likely incorrect recognising his own limitations in that there exists “greater margins of error in dating material before 2000 BCE”\textsuperscript{213}. Mallowan did theorise that the stratigraphy below the grey-brick stratum which he designated the Red-Eye Temple could likely be associated with the Uruk period.

Since excavations resumed at Brak in 1976 the increased evidence and data led to the gradual questioning of Mallowan’s original excavations and dates. Through excavations in Areas CH and TW, particularly in 1992 to 1993, 1998 and in 2001 to 2002, the new Eye-Idols uncovered in these excavations came from strata dated to the Northern Middle Uruk period. This new evidence led to an ultimate revision and redating of the stratigraphy of the Eye-Temple via these Eye-Idols. This in turn led the Jemdet Nasr dates associated with the earliest levels of the Eye-Temple Complex to also be revised and redated with the assistance of evidence from

\textsuperscript{206} Gibson and Maktash 2000; McGuire Gibson, Sanders, and Carrie Hritz 2002
\textsuperscript{207} Reichel 2009.
\textsuperscript{208} Gibson and Maktash 2000, 477-478.
\textsuperscript{209} McGuire Gibson, Sanders, and Carrie Hritz 2002, 56-57.
\textsuperscript{210} Gibson and Maktash 2000, 58.
\textsuperscript{211} Mallowan 1947, 4.
\textsuperscript{212} Mallowan 1947, 6.
\textsuperscript{213} Mallowan 1947, 5.
Area TW. But overall it was the presence of Eye-Idols in the TW Level 16 structure\textsuperscript{214} that was the major cause for re-evaluation, with this new addition to the data. The Grey Eye-Temple stratum is now dated to the mid to late fourth millennium BCE or the Northern Middle Uruk, not the Jemdet Nasr Period\textsuperscript{215}, and the Eye-Idols have also been redated to this period. The Eye-Idol at Hamoukar Area B are dated accurately to the Middle 4\textsuperscript{th} Millennium BCE, or the Northern Middle Uruk, chronologically linking them to the Tell Brak artefacts.

\textsuperscript{214} Oates and Oates 2002
\textsuperscript{215} Emberling 2002, 84.
Religion at Tell Brak in the 4th Millennium BCE

Religion in 4th Millennium Northern Mesopotamia is still a poorly understood topic. The discussion of evidence related to religious based structures, and the associated artefacts like the Eye-Idols remains speculative and imprecise, with a range of theories that tend to draw heavily upon southern examples\textsuperscript{216}. As there have been no significant archaeological finds to shed new light on early religion in the 4\textsuperscript{th} and late 5\textsuperscript{th} Millennium BCE knowledge of early religion in the region remains vague, and thus focus on this area of study has diminished since the 1990s\textsuperscript{217}. It has only been in the last few decades that a firm understanding of urban and societal development in the region has begun to be understood. It is now widely accepted that northern Mesopotamia developed in urban and societal complexity before the settlements in the south, and Tell Brak is considered one of the earliest and most significant sites in the North in terms of complexity.

From observing the contextual evidence from Tell Brak it is widely accepted that the entire Eye-Temple Complex is an example of monumental architecture, serving a significant religious function at the site from the early 4\textsuperscript{th} Millennium BCE onwards, evident from the continued redevelopment of the complex seen across the four known strata\textsuperscript{218}. Correspondingly, the artefact type of Eye-Idols is confirmed as a votive offering which was deposited in the Grey Eye-Temple strata as a practice of ritual discard\textsuperscript{219}. A similar practice having been seen in the late Early Dynastic examples in the Diyala Region such as the Square Temple I, and the Nintu VI Temple\textsuperscript{220}.

Understanding the context of an artefact type is extremely valuable, but regrettably in the case of the Eye-Idols at Tell Brak and Hamoukar the context has not been able to confirm unequivocally what deity or deities the Eye-Idols were associated with\textsuperscript{221}. This is due to there being no written records to confirm or deny the religious practices and deities at Tell Brak or Hamoukar during the period in which the Eye-Idols were manufactured and used\textsuperscript{222}. As the 4\textsuperscript{th} Millennium BCE saw the increased development of urban and societal complexity, it is likely that as society at the sites of Tell Brak and Hamoukar expanded so did their systems of religion\textsuperscript{223}. There is no definitive evidence to confirm a shared deity or belief system across the region now. But the finding of Eye-Idols at both sites, along with the positioning of Tell Brak and Hamoukar along river systems and known established trade routes makes it highly probable that there was a sharing of local religious

\textsuperscript{216} Mallowan 1969; Mallowan 1977; Seawrigh 1976; Meslin 2005
\textsuperscript{217} Bréniquet 1996; Oates 1997.
\textsuperscript{218} Emberling 2002; Ur 2010.
\textsuperscript{219} Emberling 2002, 82.
\textsuperscript{220} Delougaz et al. 1942, 89,180-181.
\textsuperscript{221} Oates and Oates 1993
\textsuperscript{222} Matney 1986.
\textsuperscript{223} Emberling and McDonald 2003; McMahon 2009
beliefs. But at this early stage it is generally accepted that religion and belief systems now were functioning on a smaller site based level, with deities likely being associated with each site like a ‘city-god’.

One of the earliest insights was that the Eye-Temple complex was dedicated to an ‘Eye’ divinity, a deity or deities of unknown gender that was directly associated with the eye image. Either in a literal sense, of being directly linked with aspects of sight or of healing the human eye. On a more symbolic and probable level it is likely that the prominent eye feature was representative of the themes often associated with the divine such as omnipotence and being watched over by an unknown deity or deities. The eyes represented the divine whilst the ornamentation on the Eye-Idols such as headwear and chest designs added further meaning such as defining who left the votive or what the prayer or offering meant and represented.

The ‘Eye’ has often been a prominent symbol in Near Eastern art and across Near Eastern religions, with the symbol today still holding strong meaning. Linked to this symbolism, it is suggested the Eye-Idols are directly linked to an ‘Eye Divinity’, an unspecified God or Goddess associated with representations of fertility, protection and potency. This association was predominant in the 1950s and 1960s in archaeological interpretation as it provided a good general answer when the evidence wasn’t strong enough to provide any more substantial and definite conclusions. Dr Margarete Reimschneider and O.G.S Crawford were strong supporters of this theoretical framework in that there was a universally shared deity the ‘Eye-God’ in the ancient Near East embodied by the stylistic eye symbol. Crawford took this theory further in claiming the Eye-Idols and Eye-Temple complex were dedicated to a universally shared ‘Eye-Goddess’ that was associated with fertility and potency, but there is no significant evidence beyond the eye images to support this theory.

At Tell Brak in the mid to late 3rd Millennium BCE the deity Belet-Nagar became prominent at the site, and it is theorised that there may have been a separate temple built to the worship of this goddess, with the Eye-Temple loosing prominence in this period. Excavations at the site are yet to locate this complex, but it is thought it may be in the region of the Mitannian Palace. But this deity came to prominence much later then the Grey Eye-Temple and Eye-Idols were in use, and there is no evidence that the Eye-Idols represented this...
goddess or an earlier form of the deity, as this Goddess is never directly associated with the eye, so the views that the Eye-Idols were associated with this deity are highly unlikely.

The plan of the latest Eye-Temple strata, resembles contemporary temples seen in southern Mesopotamia like the Temple C from the Eanna District at Uruk. This upper level of the complex was decorated on the outer walls with mosaics made of clay cones with stone rosettes or eight-pointed stars. This decoration is common across northern and southern Mesopotamia, and became a symbol directly associated with the Goddess Inanna. This comparison has been applied to Tell Brak, and by extension to the earlier levels of the temple complex and its artefacts. Michel Meslin supports this theory that the Eye-Temple and the Eye-Idols were an early centre for the goddess Inanna, and that the Eye-Idols were abstract and highly symbolic representations of the goddess. But definite evidence of the emergence of worship of Inanna or Ishtar only became known in the region much later in the late 3rd Millennium BCE through to the 1st Millennium BCE, and there is no firm evidence to associate even an early form of the Goddess with the Temple complex, and even less to associate the ungendered Eye-Idols with her.

Sharing in the view that Inanna is the associated deity, Walter Andrae theorised Spectacle idols were ‘hut-symbols’ or symbolic representations of religious structures such as temples, with the rounded eye section representative of curved reed bundles, a symbol often associated with complexes dedicated to the later Goddess Inanna. By association this viewpoint was applied to the Tell Brak artefacts, in that they were a more stylised and abstract indication of the goddess, and this is supported by the multiple Eye-Idol Type 3.2 where a smaller Idol is incised upon the front of the larger like a worshipper within a shrine.

Apart from Belet-Nagar and Inanna, the other common deity that has been associated with the Eye-Idols and the Eye-Temple is the 2nd and 1st Millennium Goddess Ninhursag. The unique chest designs on a Single Eye-Idol recorded by Mallowan, has been used to suggest specific links to this northern fertility goddess. It has a stylised Stag surmounted by a Bird (Figure 2.8) carved upon the chest. This coupling of images has commonly been associated with an early representation of the Goddess Ninhursag. As this is the only definable image carved upon an Eye-idol, this association between the goddess and the artefact type has endured, despite any further and more conclusive evidence being found to support this interpretation. Another example of where the chest designs on the Eye-Idols have been used as representations of specific deities is the common zig-zag pattern (Figure 2.2-2.4). This

237 Emberling 2002
238 Mallowan 1947; Emberling 2002,85.
239 Meslin 2005, 2940-2943.
240 Andrae 1933.
241 Frankfort 1949, 195-197.
242 Mallowan 1947; 34. KOÇ and TEMÜR 2014
243 Mallowan 1947, 1956
244 Mallowan 1947; 34. KOÇ and TEMÜR 2014
zig-zag image is similar in design to symbols of later Sumerian and 2nd and 3rd Millennia art\textsuperscript{245}, resembling indications of water, perhaps representing the God Enki\textsuperscript{246}. Overall the similarities in images is not considered conclusive enough to accurately confirm association with any specific deity.

Another less accepted theory is that the Eye-Idols represent a form of divine family, Type 3 or Multiple Eye-Idols are used as evidence, where the single known example that has 3 eyes (Figure 3.9) has been theorised as representative of a trinity, although which trinity of deities is never defined\textsuperscript{247}. Supporting a similar view of linked deities, is that of a divine family of deities\textsuperscript{248}, where Multiple Eye-Idols (Figures 3.1-3.18) are used as visual representation of a group of linked deities. But as with defining the divinity the artefact type is associated with, and on a larger level the divinities worshipped.

But overall the view that the Eye-Idols are linked with a divinity that was directly associated, most likely in a symbolic sense, with the prominent set of eyes is the best explanation that can be assumed, as the evidence is not strong enough to determine any more specific explanations. It can also be said that the finding of a partial fragment of copper panelling with incised eye designs and a fragmentary stone eye-socket statue in the latest level of the Eye Temple indicates that the presence of this deity remained consistent across the periods associated with the temple strata\textsuperscript{249}, and that the associated divinity may have been a deity associated specifically with the site of Tell Brak in the 4th Millennium BCE.

\textsuperscript{245} O.G.S 1957, 32-35
\textsuperscript{246} O.G.S 1957
\textsuperscript{247} Frankfort 1949, Van Buren 1955.
\textsuperscript{248} Mallowan 1947, 1956.
\textsuperscript{249} Mallowan 1947, 1956, 1965
**The Typology of the Eye-Idols**

**Introduction to Eye-Idol Typologies**

Typologies are a significant tool in archaeological research, and the creation of typologies in the study of artefacts allows for large and complex amounts of data to be easily comprehended and organised. When examining an artefact type as complex and physically varied as Eye-Idols the development of a typology remains the most logical and valuable way to conduct a comprehensive investigation, and allows for a more organised and extensive discussion of the artefact type to be accomplished. For the study of Eye-Idols the creation of a working typological framework is essential. The original typology created by Mallowan provides a solid base, but this has been further adapted and evolved to make the study more comprehensive and clear. This approach allows for a broader more organised discussion of the artefact type overall.

The first typology was created by M.E.L Mallowan in 1947. This typology shown below has remained the most consistently used across academia, and has also been the basis for the small number of newer typologies created. But as with all typologies there are issues and limitations, such as the introduction of new evidence and developments in archaeology which can render them less effective. In the case of Mallowan his typology is not comprehensive of flexible enough to deal with Eye-Idols that fall between two types due to their physical characteristics.

- **Type 1** - Single Eye-Idol.
- **Type 2** - Eye-Idols with chest designs.
- **Type 3** - Multiple Idols, as in those defined as sets with a single body and multiple necks and sets of eyes.
- **Type 4** - Idols that have single and multiple smaller Idols upon the chest of the larger Idol.
- **Type 5** - Eye-Idols with head wear
- **Type 6** - Spectacle Idols.

Catherine Bréniquet in her 1996 exploration of Eye-Idols and the linked Spectacle Idol artefact type created a typology with only three Types shown below. She shares Mallowan’s conclusions that the Tell Brak examples are likely to be a phenomenon found chiefly at the site of Tell Brak, and she believes that the

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250 Matney 1986, 22.
251 Mallowan 1947, 198-199.
252 Mallowan 1947, 198-199.
253 Mallowan 1947; Matney 1986; Yaylali 2014.
254 Bréniquet 1996.
Spectacle Idol Type is inextricably linked to the Eye-Idol Type, thus she included them in the same typology, as different types of a single artefact.\textsuperscript{255}

**Type 1** - All Eye-Idols from Tell Brak.

**Type 2** - All larger Spectacle Idols made of terracotta or clay with bell-shaped bodies, with a neck and two perforated holes.

**Type 3** - All Smaller Idols made of stone with spectacle-like perforations.

Timothy Matney in his technical study of the Eye-Idols copies Mallowan’s typology almost exactly, except that he excludes aspects of Type 6\textsuperscript{256}. He does agree with Mallowan that the Eye-Idols of Tell Brak are probably a phenomenon unique to the site, and he also puts forward the point that Type 6, Spectacle Idols, should not be classed as a different type of Eye-Idol\textsuperscript{257}. Instead the stone examples (Figures 4.1-4.16) can be considered as distantly linked to Eye-Idols in terms of iconological and iconographic value, but they should be classed as an amulet not an idol. Larger and less refined clay examples (Figures 4.17-4.32) should be categorized as utilitarian, and a practical object used in everyday life holding no iconographic or iconological significance\textsuperscript{258}.

The original typological framework presented by Mallowan\textsuperscript{259} is useful in beginning to form an understanding of the artefact type and its features, as well as providing a starting point to further explore their function and perhaps meaning. But for this study extensive research has proven that the creation and utilisation of an adapted typology beyond that of Mallowan and later academics like Bréniquet\textsuperscript{260} and Matney\textsuperscript{261} is a more functional and useful approach.

This adapted typology, shown below, breaks the Eye-Idol form into three Types with subgroups, intentionally excluding the Spectacle Idols. By organising the Eye-Idols into this structured typology it allows for the characteristics of the artefact type to be more comprehensively explored, and the theories and interpretations surrounding function and meaning to be more effectively expressed and organised.

**Type 1** – Single Eye-Idol Type

**Type 2** – Decorated Single Eye-Idol Type

\textsuperscript{255} Bréniquet 1996, 3-7.
\textsuperscript{256} Matney 1986, 15-16.
\textsuperscript{257} Matney 1986, 9-12.
\textsuperscript{258} Matney 1986, 15-16.
\textsuperscript{259} Mallowan 1947, 198-199.
\textsuperscript{260} Matney 1986, 9-16.
\textsuperscript{261} Bréniquet 1996, 3-7.
- Idols with Chest Designs
- Idols with Head Wear

**Type 3 – Multiple Eye-Idol Type**
- Multiple Eye-Idols with a Single Body
- Multiple Eye-Idols with Smaller Examples upon the Larger
- Decorated Multiple Eye-Idols.

**Type 1 – Single Eye-Idol Type**
This type is referred to as the Standard Type or Single Eye-Idol Type, and is characterised by its single body with a stem like neck surmounted by a single set of eyes with a single eyebrow. It makes up most examples of Eye-Idols (Figures 1.1-1.35). This type is undecorated without headwear and chest designs\(^{262}\). The only common feature is the small ‘V’ design carved at the base of the neck where the body begins\(^{263}\). Although this is a common feature of Type 1 not all Idols of this type have this characteristic. The Eye-Idols can also be entirely plain, with difference notable only from stone colouration and height (Figures 1.1-1.35)\(^{264}\).

**Type 2 – Decorated Single Eye-Idol Type**
Type 2 is defined as the Decorated Single Eye-Idol Type, and overall these artefacts are far less abundant. These Idols are like those in Type 1, characterised by their single body with a stem-like neck surmounted by a single set of eyes with a single eyebrow. Except the major difference is that they have decoration beyond the carved eyebrow and common ‘V’ design carved at the base of the neck. Instead artefacts of this type have carved decoration of varying styles and complexity such as chest designs assigned into sub-group 2.1 (Figures 2.1-2.10) and head wear assigned into sub-group 2.2 (Figures 2.11-2.23). The exact meanings of these designs are still generally unknown, like a language that has been lost through time, but to hone in on the most plausible explanations some of the major theories are discussed.

\(^{262}\) Mallowan 1947; Emberling 2002; Seawright 1988
\(^{263}\) Van Buren 1955.
\(^{264}\) Mallowan 1947, 198.
2.1 – Eye-Idols with Chest Designs

The most common form of decoration upon Eye-Idols that this study has observed is chest designs of which there is a variety of styles (Figures 2 and 3) such as:

- horizontal rows and small groupings of dots. (Figures 2.1 and 2.5)
- angular and rounded zigzags both singular and in groupings. (Figures 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3.15)
- vertical groupings of striations commonly upon the upper chest, or upon the base. (Figures 2.7, 3.16)
- beaded necklaces at the base of the neck, but these are less common. (Figure 2.10)

2.2 – Eye-Idols with Head Wear

A further form of decoration that adorns Type 2 is head wear or stylised hairstyles, that appear as an extension from the set of eyes and single eyebrow. This feature occurs less frequently across the artefact type, and comes in many varieties (Figures 4, 1.38, 1.40, 2.11-2.23). The most frequently observed is the triangular design with horizontal stripes (Figures 2.13, 2.16, 2.18), followed by what resembles in a modern sense a crown with three distinct ridges (Figures 1.37, 2.12, 2.23), along with head ware which resembles more rounded hemispherical dome head ware (Figures 1.39, 2.11, 2.15, 2.20, 2.22).

Type 3 – Multiple Eye-Idol Type

The Multiple Eye-Idol Type or Double Eye-Idol (Figures 3.1-3.18) is a design that is observed less frequently compared with the Single Eye-Idol type. The characteristics of this type vary depending upon the sub-group 3.1,3.2 or 3.3. But what defines Type 3, overall is that the artefact has a single distinguishable body from which multiple Idols or sets of eyes are attached.

This study goes beyond the typology created by M.E.L Mallowan\textsuperscript{265}, particularly in the creation of Type 3. Instead of having two separate types for joined Eye-Idols, it was decided that all Eye-Idols that have the characteristic of being joined or linked should be grouped under the same Type, but divided into more workable and organised sub-groups\textsuperscript{266}.

\textsuperscript{265} Mallowan 1947, 198-199.
\textsuperscript{266} O.G.S 1957; Andrae 1933
3.1 - Multiple Eye-Idols with a Single Body
This sub-group of Type 3 is characterised by having a single body from which there are two or more stem like necks, each surmounted by a single set of eyes with a single eyebrow. This is the most common form of Multiple Eye-Idols (Figures 3.1-3.9).

3.2 - Multiple Eye-Idols with Smaller Examples upon the Larger
This sub-group of Type 3 is characterised by having a larger single Eye-Idol, with single or multiple smaller Eye-Idols represented on it. This can be observed as a larger Eye-Idol having smaller single or multiple representations incised upon the front of the artefacts body (Figures 3.10-3.12), or seen with a smaller Eye-Idol atop the eye section of the larger Eye-Idol (Figures 3.13-3.14). This sub-group was designated originally as the distinct Type 4 by M.E.L Mallowan and was referred to by the Mother and Child classification. This label has continued to be attached to the Eye-Idol type. The choice has been made in this study to make this type of Eye-Idol a sub-group of the Multiple Eye-Idol Type, as they are more similar then different to other sub-groups of the Multiple Eye-Idol Type. They share the characteristics of multiple examples being joined or intertwined within the single artefact. In the case of this sub-groups a smaller Idol is incised upon the larger single Eye-Idol.

3.3 - Decorated Multiple Eye-Idols
This sub-group encapsulates a mixture of the previous 2 sub-groups. The defining feature is decoration that sets the sub-group apart from the previous two. This decoration comes in the form of chest designs and the even less commonly head ware (Figures 3.15-3.18), probably indicating that these decorated Idols represented even more specific aspects of the Eye-Idols value, meaning and function.

267 Mallowan 1947.
Nicholson Museum Mini Study of Eye-Idols

The Nicholson Museum like numerous other Museum and University collections internationally has accumulated a small collection of the artefact type known as ‘Eye-Idols’. The Nicholson Museum has a total of 15 intact and fragmentary examples of the Single Eye-Idol Type\textsuperscript{268}, Decorated Single Eye-Idols\textsuperscript{269}, and Multiple Eye-Idols\textsuperscript{270} as part of their Near Eastern collection. The presence of these artefacts is not exceptional, but it is the variety and number of the group that is unique and extremely valuable to any meaningful study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eye-Idol Typology</th>
<th>Examples from The Nicholson Museum Collection.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type 1 – Single Eye-Idol Type</td>
<td>NM50.288, NM59.16, NM66.132, NM66.134, NM50.294 (Fragmentary), NM66.133, NM66.135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 2.1 – Decorated Single Eye-Idol with Chest Designs.</td>
<td>NM50.289, NM59.17, NM59.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 2.2 – Decorated Single Eye-Idol with Head Wear</td>
<td>NM50.287, NM50.291, NM50.292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type 3.1 – Multiple Eye-Idol with a Single Body</td>
<td>NM50.293, NM50.290 (Fragmentary),</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(For a more in-depth understanding of each individual artefact in the Nicholson Museum Collection refer to the Nicholson Museum Eye-Idol Catalogue in Appendix 2)

With the Museum’s permission, I have been allowed to conduct a physical first hand examination of the Eye-Idols from their display and storage collection. The initial decision to go beyond looking at Museum catalogue collections and written sources was the attempt to form a deeper understanding of the artefact type beyond just the observations and conclusions of what has been written, and assumptions of other scholars over the years. This first-hand study is a unique opportunity to see artefacts not published on the online catalogue or available for public viewing. This made the study not only specialised but also highly valuable, allowing for the formation of a richer understanding of the artefact type overall, and allowing for individual observations to be formed about the artefacts beyond just what the museum has recorded, and the insights of existing scholarly publications.

\textsuperscript{268} The Nicholson Museum, Near Eastern Collection, Tell Brak Syria, NM50.288, NM59.16, NM66.132, NM66.134, NM50.294 (Fragmentary), NM66.133, NM66.135.
\textsuperscript{269} The Nicholson Museum, Near Eastern Collection, Tell Brak Syria, NM50.289, NM59.17, NM59.18, NM50.287, NM50.291, NM50.292.
\textsuperscript{270} The Nicholson Museum, Near Eastern Collection, Tell Brak Syria, NM50.293, NM50.290 (Fragmentary).
To begin with it must be noted that at times the measurements of the Museum and the measurements that have been taken during this mini-study using standard callipers do differ, but the decision has been made to use the measurements recorded during this examination. When thickness is referred to it denotes the most consistent thickness at the centre of the chest, or in the case of fragments like NM50.292 (Figure 1.37 and Appendix 2: NM50.292) and NM50.294 (Figure 1.36 and Appendix 2: NM50.294) the thickness at the centre of the remaining section. Overall this is quite accurate as the Eye-Idols tend to be quite uniform in thickness.

Decorated Eye-Idols in the Nicholson Collection

Of the fifteen Eye-Idols in the collection 6 are classed as Type 271. NM50.287 (Figure 2.13 and Appendix 2: NM50.287) is an example of a Decorated Single Eye-Idol like (Figures 2.1-2.23) which has been carved with a headdress which begins just above the eye section carved like an extension of the eyebrows. The headdress is triangular, engraved with four horizontal lines, and is the dominant feature of the artefact. the length of the headwear is just slightly larger than the chest section of the Eye-Idol making it clear this feature is intended to be prominent and significant.

Artefact NM50.291 (Figure 2.14 and Appendix 2: NM50.291), an intact example of a Decorated Single Eye-Idol like (Figures 2.11-2.23) with prominent headwear, and NM50.292 a head fragment (Figure 1.37 and Appendix 2: NM50.292), both share the same headdress design with three distinct rounded ridges resembling what in modern terms would be considered crown-like. The smallest of these ridges is the central, and within the flat surface of the headwear there is a carved outline, with a mark resembling a ‘W’ like horizontal line, the headdress overall echoing the shape of the eye and eyebrow it sits above. Like NM50.287 (Figure 2.13 and Appendix 2: NM50.287) with the triangular headdress the exact meaning of this feature is not known. But in general, the detailed carving on such a small area, and the higher quality of material of these decorated Eye-Idols indicates a higher level of importance and perhaps value either to the maker or devotee, in comparison to simpler Idols like NM66.132 (Figure 1.27 and Appendix 2: 66.132).

The Single Eye-Idols272 in the Nicholson Museum Collection have what is considered the common feature of the single ‘V’ design carved at the base of the neck like. This feature has been widely interpreted as representative of the top edge of a garment or a decorative neck piece. Some Eye-Idols in the collection have further unique carvings beyond the ‘V’ design. Artefact NM59.18 (Figure 2.5 and Appendix 2: NM59.18) has the carved chest design of four horizontal rows of small dots engraved at almost equal intervals like (Figure 2.1 and 2.6). There are approximately thirty dots in total. This feature is unprecedented and its exact meaning

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271 The Nicholson Museum, Near Eastern Collection, Tell Brak Syria, NM50.289, NM59.17, NM59.18, NM50.287, NM50.291, NM50.292.
is uncertain, but as this unique chest design appears just under the ‘V’ carved at the base of the neck it is assumed that it could be representative of some form of fabric design or a sewn pattern. The use of dots overall is not a common design across the Eye-Idol artefact type, and the only slightly similar example can be seen in the Metropolitan Museum Collection in artefact 51.59.3 (Figure 2.1) where there are 2 clusters of seven dots\textsuperscript{273}. 

Artefact NM59.17 (Figure 2.4 and Appendix 2: NM59.17) also has chest designs, with three horizontal 'M' like lines carved across the upper chest just below the common ‘V’ carved at the base of the neck. The engraved eyes and chest designs of this artefact stand out against the whitish stone, as they are discoloured with a darker substance, although whether this is an intentional feature or discolouration that has arisen over time is uncertain. It is also uncertain what this design is indicative of, but being below the ‘V’ carved at the base of the neck makes it appear to be a design on a garment. The presence of this kind of decoration on other Idols (Figures 2.1-2.9) have given rise to theories that it is a stylised representation of breasts or even a stylised representation of the landscape\textsuperscript{274}. Standard Eye Idol NM50.289 (Figure 2.3 and Appendix 2: NM50.289) has a similar style chest design to NM59.17 (Figure 2.4 and Appendix 2: NM59.17) but is different in that it has sharper more angular shoulders and there are two separate groups of three clusters of inverted ‘V’s, one group on each side of the chest. These clusters are just under the standard single ‘V’ design carved at the base of the neck, which supports the theory that they could represent a fold or pleats in a garment, or an embroidered design.

**Breakage and Damage**

A unique feature of the collection is that the Idols are also in a variety of different conditions which is useful to the observer, as insights can be gained into the different qualities and types of stones used in the artefact type and how they have survived. Linked to this the collection also provides an in-depth look at breakage patterns of the artefact type, as there are numerous examples of different forms of breakage. Overall, it’s difficult to confirm if breakage occurred prior to the deposition of the artefact, but the accepted conclusion that the Eye-Idols are examples of ritual discard left in the Grey Eye-Temple Stratum before the structure was infilled with mud bricks makes it highly probable that the weight of material pressing on the depositional layers when the artefacts were discarded could be the major factor behind breakage. Single Eye-Idol NM50.289 (Figure 2.3 and Appendix 2: NM50.289) and NM59.17 (Figure 2.4 and Appendix 2: NM59.17) not only have similar chest designs and material, but both have also been damaged. The right half of the eye section of each artefact has been snapped off, and later repaired. Another Single Eye-Idol, NM59.16 (Figure


\textsuperscript{274}Bréniquet 1996.
1.26 and Appendix 2: NM59.16) also has a similar breakage pattern but is less obvious in its post-excavation repairs. This is quite telling as it indicates that the Idols are particularly delicate at points where they have the most carving, weakening the fabric of the artefact and making it prone to breakage. First hand tactile observation has consistently proven that the eye section and the neck are the thinnest points of the Idols and that the carving can be so deep, that when the lighter coloured stone examples are held to the light they appear transparent. This thinner weakened section of the artefact type can be seen in examples like NM50.292 (Figure 1.37 and Appendix 2: NM50.292) and NM50.294 (Figure 1.36 and Appendix 2: NM50.294) where the bodies have been lost due to breakage and all that remains are the intact fragments of the eye section, or in the case of NM50.294 (Figure 1.36 and Appendix 2: NM50.294) a fragment of the eye section and partial neck that has been broken, and the body has been lost.

Another form of breakage that is commonly seen is across the bottom of the artefact, involving the body and often the corners. Example NM50.293 (Figure 3.1 and Appendix 2: NM50.293) shows such breakage, as the bottom left corner has been cracked off, lost and subsequently repaired. NM59.18 (Figure 2.5 and Appendix 2: NM59.18) base snapped in half at a diagonal angle and lost, so it has been entirely replaced during restoration. As to be expected with such a thin and flat artefact the edges are weakened.

The material of the artefacts has also been linked to breakage, and the work of Professor Matney in scientifically analysing the material of the Eye-Idols he studied gives some highly valuable insights\textsuperscript{275}, particularly regarding burning. The assumption that burning was used to intentionally darken Eye-Idols, was first introduced by Max Mallowan\textsuperscript{276} but in many cases alabaster of this kind can come in a natural dark grey. Although burning did occur across the artefact type it often results in causing the stone to become brittle and very crumbly, overall weakening the fabric of the artefact. The Museum’s collection has some good examples of this. Artefact NM66.135 (Figure 1.35 and Appendix 2: NM66.135) has had the edges of the eye section, tops of shoulders and the bottom right hand corner chipped off, whilst NM50.290 (Figure 3.2 and Appendix 2: NM50.290), an example of a Multiple Eye-Idol, has had its necks broken and later repaired, as well as having badly broken and chipped edges. Both examples are a fine-grained Gypsum or what is commonly called alabaster, naturally a darker grey form. The indication that both have been burnt with the intention of making the fabric darker is seen in the colour difference between the outer and inner fabric along break lines, along with the brittle, crumbly and chalky state of the stone, which has caused the extensive breakage. It is interesting to note the choice to burn the artefacts greatly weakened the material and made them prone to breakage all to darken the fabric, a quality that must have been valued\textsuperscript{277}.

\textsuperscript{275}Matney 1986
\textsuperscript{276}Mallowan 1947
\textsuperscript{277}Matney 1986, 19-21.
New Observations on the Eye-Idols

This study has resulted in two new observations not previously noted by the Nicholson Museum or in other sources. The first feature is observed on NM50.288 (Figure 1.25 and Appendix 2: NM50.288) a small example of the Standard Eye Idol Type. This Eye-Idol has one unique feature on its back. On the top right side of the back of the eye section there is a deep incised line, that resembles an upside down ‘V’. When first observed it was unclear what this upside down ‘V’ represented, but it can be assumed from the neat edges that the carving was intentional and not the result of damage. It is further theorised that perhaps this feature occurred during manufacture, as the carving on the back mirrors part of the eyebrow design that sits above the complete eyes carved on the front of the artefact. Taking this deduction further, it may have been the case that what has now become the back of the artefact, may have in fact originally intended to have been the front, but the artisan chose to instead turn the artefact over and continue working on the same artefact, this changing sides leaving the partial eyebrow on the back. It is thought that this changing of sides may have been due to the initial carving of the eyebrow becoming too pointed making it unviable to complete the eye section correctly.

The next major insight observed through the first-hand study was that out of the fifteen Eye-Idols examined both visually and tactiley, five artefacts\textsuperscript{278} have unusual shallow but still clearly visible lines that span the length of the sides of each artefact. These are not as deep or neat as the carved designs. The line appears on both sides of the Eye-Idols and in many cases, are straight. The exact cause and meaning of this feature is unknown. One explanation is that this feature is not decorative, but perhaps evidence of how the artefacts were manufactured. One alternative is that perhaps during the carving process the Eye-Idols were placed in a kind of apparatus, or what would be called in a modern sense a form of vice. This apparatus would have likely served the purpose of immobilizing the Eye-Idol for carving or polishing to take place, and to ensure there was no breakage or uneven pressure on the thin artefact. The lines on the sides may have been the result of the pressure of this apparatus, or perhaps were carved into the unfinished Idol to allow them to slot in more securely. On examination, it was observed that the Eye-Idols with these features are made of a very similar form of alabaster. This cannot be judged chemically as no examination of this kind was possible, but visually they have similar colourations and physically they have a very similar feel, being soft and easily scratched. This makes it not unlikely that even pressure or slight friction could cause indentations to form. Another related theory is that these small grooves were carved as slots to allow the Eye-Idols to be placed in stands for display, but since no stands have been found this circumstance is very difficult to prove.

\textsuperscript{278} The Nicholson Museum, Near Eastern Collection, Tell Brak Syria, NM59.17, NM59.18, NM66.132, NM50.291 and NM66.134
Artefact NM50.293 (Figure 3.1 and Appendix 2: NM50.293) has a similar feature to these five artefacts\textsuperscript{279}. It is on the back of the artefact and is only noticeable during first-hand observation. The back of the artefact is unpolished, and has a large horizontal groove carved approximately in the centre of the back. Being above the damaged corner, it can be assumed that this groove is not a part of the reconstruction and repair that has been undertaken. This begs the question whether this is an intended design, or an inclusion in the stone? It is believed that this groove was present before the piece may have been burned, as the inner section of the groove is darkened. It is theorised that the groove may have been formed during the production process as a part of an apparatus used to hold the stone during the engraving process, or perhaps the groove is indicative of the artefact being held upright in a form of stand, but this can be only speculative.

Never the less this feature is unusual and widely unrecorded, and it would be interesting to observe more examples internationally to see if this feature is common, but has just been over looked, as the sides are very thin and not widely focussed on, and very rarely photographed.

\textsuperscript{279} The Nicholson Museum, Near Eastern Collection, Tell Brak Syria, NM59.17, NM59.18, NM66.132, NM50.291 and NM66.134
Spectacle Idols and Eye-Idols

The relationship between the true Eye-Idols and Spectacle Idols has often been difficult to define. It is common for both types to be categorised as different variations of a larger single artefact type that is often called Eye-Idols, depending upon the choice of the author. This is not only confusing, but inaccurate as what clearly defines an Eye-Idol, be it a Single Eye-Idol, a Decorated Single Eye-Idol or a Multiple Eye-Idol, is different from what defines a Spectacle-Idol as they are both physically and functionally different and occur in a different range of locations.

Physical Comparison of both Artefact Types

An Eye-Idol is commonly made of alabaster; a small number are made of bone. The artefact has a flat oblong body, often less than a centimetre in thickness, making it unable to stand easily upright. The body is surmounted by single or multiple sets of eyes carved with heavy upper and lower eye-lids, bulging orbits and deeply carved pupils. Above the eyes sits a single deeply carved and accentuated joined eyebrow. The lack of any further facial features or identifiable limbs makes the eyes the most prominent feature. In terms of functionality Eye-Idols are believed to be votive offerings that were discarded ritually in the Eye Temple at Tell Brak and in Area B structures at Tell Hamoukar.

Spectacle-Idols are fundamentally different from the Eye-Idols. They can be made of stone (Figures 4.1-4.16), but most frequently they are made of coarse clay (Figures 4.17-4.32). The body of the artefact is most commonly bell shaped, or thick enough to ensure that the artefact can stand upright unaided. Above where the body section tapers to a thin point is a wider flatter segment that has two perforated holes, which could be interpreted as eye-like but this is not as confirmable as with Eye-Idols. The resemblance of this section to eye glasses led M.E.L Mallowan to nickname the artefact type ‘Spectacle Idols’, whilst prior to this they were referred to by scholars like Walter Andrae and E.A Speiser as ‘Cult Symbols’. This design allows for the Spectacle Idols to stand upright and be observed from all angles, although it is highly unlikely that the standard form of Spectacle Idol was utilised for visual or aesthetic purposes. It was probably more functional and utilitarian in use which would explain the undecorated and generally unfinished nature of the artefact type, compared to the highly worked and in many cases, decorated examples of the Eye Idols. Spectacle Idols

Matney 1986, 5-6.
Cooper 2015, 2.
McGuire Gibson, Sanders, and Carrie Hritz 2002; Gibson 2000
Watson 2011; Mallowan 1947; Van Buren 1955; Bréniquet 1996

Speiser 1935, Andrae 1933.
Breniquet 1996; Yaylali 2014
are not decorated with chest designs or headwear as seen with Eye-Idols, and only very occasionally have an incised line between the perforated holes (Figure 4.28) or along the neck area (Figure 4.21). Overall the Spectacle Idols are far less uniform in size, design or material than the Eye-Idols.

The Contexts of Spectacle Idols and Eye-Idols

Spectacle Idols are not as common as Eye-Idols, but Spectacle Idols are found across a far more widespread geographically and chronologically diverse area, whilst the Eye Idol artefact type is primarily confined to Tell Brak and Tell Hamoukar but is abundant in number. This emphasises that Eye-Idols are a unique artefact type whose origins and dominant use was peculiar to the site of Tell Brak and very close exterior regions. M.E.L Mallowan notes that “Unlike the Eye-idols which have been found in such profusion at Brak and nowhere else, the spectacle topped idol has occurred on many other Mesopotamian sites, but neither at Brak nor elsewhere does it occur in any considerable quantities. In other words, the spectacle-topped type of idol is rare, but widely diffused; the eye-idol common, but confined to the site of Brak, a more specialised product of the Khabur district.” The largest collection of Spectacle Idols was found at Tell Brak, in similar stratigraphic layers as the Eye-Idols. But overall the ritual function of the Spectacle Idols is not certain as it is with the Eye-Idols. The find contexts of the Spectacle Idols are far broader than that of the Eye-Idols, with stone and coarse clay examples having been excavated at numerous sites.

The Differing Meaning and Function of the Stone and Coarse Clay Examples

The best way to discuss Spectacle Idols is to do so by breaking the artefact type into stone examples and coarse clay examples. Stone examples (Figure 4.1-4.16) are found with less frequency from sites such as Tell Brak, Tepe Gawra and Khafajah in the contexts of temples and large communal structures. Overall these stone examples tend to be rectangular, thick with rounded edges, giving the base a slightly rounded appearance. Above the body sits two joined and rounded volutes, each with a single perforated hole. These examples are quite varied in design, and some bear very close resemblance to the Tell Brak Eye-Idols. This suggests that a small number such as (Figures 4.4-4.16) may just be simple examples of the Eye-Idol type, and being found in the context of the Eye-Temple supports this.

287 Van Buren 1950; 142.
288 Mallowan 1947; 200.
289 Yaylali 2014
290 Matney 1986, 9-10.
291 Breniquet 1996; Yaylali 2014
Coarse Clay Spectacle Idols (Figures 4.17-4.32) are far simpler in design and are found most frequently in domestic contexts, such as Tepe Gawra where a small cache of these Spectacle Idols was found with domestic tools\textsuperscript{292}. Overall, coarse clay Spectacle Idols are far larger than the stone examples, and they have hollow bases, whilst stone examples are always solid\textsuperscript{293}. Coarse clay Spectacle Idols are more complex and difficult to understand compared to stone examples. They are often grouped together with stone examples, but beyond being of a similar shape they are made of a different material and are found in different contexts from stone examples and Eye-Idols, with their function and meaning likely fundamentally different from stone examples and Eye-Idols. Therefore, it seems to be not only confusing but inaccurate to view Spectacle Idols made of coarse clay as the same related artefact type as stone Spectacle Idols and Eye-Idols. The clay used to make the Spectacle Idols is very coarse, common to utilitarian objects. Overall the find contexts of these artefacts are primarily domestic, as is seen in the Tepe Gawra examples (Figure 4.23-4.26)\textsuperscript{294}

Spectacle Idols were first discovered at Tepe Gawra\textsuperscript{295} and since this time they have been surrounded by speculation as to their function and meaning. Walter Andrae theorised that the Spectacle Idols in stone and coarse clay were ‘hut symbols’ dedicated to the goddess Ishtar or Inanna, with the perforated circles representing reed bundles atop a cult structure\textsuperscript{296}, a symbol often associated with Ishtar\textsuperscript{297}. M.E. L. Mallowan, after his discovery of Spectacle Idols at Tell Brak, argued that they must be an earlier crude form of the Eye-Idol artefact type\textsuperscript{298}. It was first theorised that they were not cult objects but utilitarian by Elizabeth Douglas Van Buren in 1950 where she suggested that they could function as loom weights or as standardised weights, but the lack of uniformity and brittle material made this unlikely\textsuperscript{299}. Linked to a functional purpose, H. Frankfort theorised that they were pot lids, with the perforated holes at the top used to secure the lid\textsuperscript{300}. In more recent years the coarse clay Spectacle Idols have become associated with weaving and the production of thread\textsuperscript{301}. The remaining question is the distinction between the clay examples and stone spectacle idols\textsuperscript{302}. A major shift from flax to woollen textile production became evident in the Uruk period, and at Tell Brak in Level 20 in the form of spindle whorls and tools, which corresponds to the 4\textsuperscript{th} millennium BCE, while the increased presence of related animal bones is seen consistently from levels 19 onwards at Tell Brak\textsuperscript{303}. A Clay Spectacle Idol (Figure 4.22) found nearby in wall debris in a domestic structure in Level 20 is thought

\textsuperscript{292}Tobler 1950, 172-173.  
\textsuperscript{293}Matney 1986, 10-11.  
\textsuperscript{294}Matney 1986, 10-12.  
\textsuperscript{295}Speiser 1928, 1935.  
\textsuperscript{296}Goff 1963.  
\textsuperscript{297}Andrae 1933.  
\textsuperscript{298}Mallowan 1947.  
\textsuperscript{299}Van Buren 1950.  
\textsuperscript{300}Frankfort 1949, 194-195.  
\textsuperscript{302}Emberling 2002, 86-87.  
\textsuperscript{303}Oates and Oates 2001.
to be linked to the production of woollen textiles. It has been suggested that this was a tool utilised in dipping yarn into dyes or for twining threads through the two perforated openings for spinning. Although not conclusive, an impression of a Cylinder Seal excavated at Tell Brak (Figure 5.6) is believed to depict female weavers using these Clay Spectacle Idols.

As previously stated, Coarse Clay examples and the smaller Stone examples are often grouped together as a single artefact type, but the clay examples have become associated with utilitarian functions. The most plausible is the suggestion by Catherine Breniquet and Serap Yaylali that these were tools used in the production of textiles, which could account for their non-decorative and coarse appearance, and their presence across such a wide geographical area, although to prove this conclusively a study of wear patterns and residue would need to be undertaken across the artefact type.

As the largest number of stone Spectacle Idols have been found at Tell Brak in levels corresponding with the Eye-Idols, and a small number from earlier levels of the Eye-Temple Complex, it has become a common view that the simpler but undeniably similar stone examples are most likely earlier versions of the later more refined Eye-Idols. This transition in design is particularly evident looking at examples such as (Figure 4.10), and therefore the meaning and function of the stone examples are highly likely to be ritual in nature, perhaps as votive offerings like the Eye-Idol artefact type. This link to cultic function can be seen looking at related artefacts like (Figure 4.1) where it appears to depict stone Spectacle Idols on display on an altar, not unlike the eye statue that was believed to be displayed on the altar in the Eye-Temple Complex at Tell Brak. That the stone examples have been found in close stratigraphic proximity to Eye-Idols at Tell Brak and Hamoukar also supports this cult related view point.

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304 Porter 2014, 113-114.
305 Breniquet 1996.
308 Bielińska 2016, 33-35.
309 Mallowan 1947, 96.
310 Mallowan 1947.
311 Gibson 2002, 58.
Discussion of Eye-Idols via the Typological Framework

**Type 1 – Single Eye-Idol Type**

As this type is undecorated it is often discussed in general terms in terms of function and meaning, as there is little that can be visually interpreted in terms of iconographic and iconological features. Functionally, like all Eye-Idols, they are theorised as votive offerings, intentionally left in the Grey Brick Stratum of the Eye Temple as items of ritual discard\(^{312}\). The significance of the single or individual nature of Type 1 is often widely speculated, and it is a common view that the artefacts could be a stylised or abstract representation of an unknown deity. But with a lack of strong evidence to support this, the most likely and plausible explanation is that Type 1 Eye-Idols and the artefact type overall functioned as a representation of an individual nature, be it an individual offering or prayer, or an actual representation of a single worshipper dedicated to and directly associated with the divine\(^{313}\).

In terms of deciphering meaning this is more difficult. The ‘V’ design carved at the base of the neck is the only form of decoration beyond the deeply carved set of eyes, and is not present on all examples. This feature is subject to much speculation; some of the less likely views are that this feature could represent the bust line of a woman, or perhaps a collar bone\(^{314}\). The most accepted and plausible explanation is that this feature is a visual indicator that the Eye-Idol is not nude, but likely clothed, and that this mark signifies the top of a garment or a simple neckpiece, also functioning to visually separate the neck and eyes from the body\(^{315}\).

The plain nature and greater frequency of Type 1 in comparison with Types 2 and 3 and their sub-groups is thought to be linked to the ultimate value of the various types\(^{316}\). From a manufacturing point of view the artefacts in this group would require the least amount of work as they are without chest designs or headwear. Visually they also show the most variety and inconsistency in terms of stone colour and quality (Figures 1.1, 1.5, 1.8, 1.11, 1.20, 1.21), as well as in size, thickness and symmetry, with some examples appearing lopsided and uneven (Figures 1.21 and 1.15). Therefore, Eye-Idols of this type can be viewed as the most basic form of the artefact, dedicated by and linked to individual worshippers. These worshippers perhaps represented the general public of Tell Brak which could account for their large abundance.

\(^{312}\) Oates and Oates 2002.
\(^{313}\) Yaylali 2014
\(^{314}\) O.G.S 1957; Van Buren 1955.
\(^{315}\) Porter 2014.
\(^{316}\) Osborne 2004.
Type 2 – Decorated Single Eye-Idol Type

Type 2 (Figures 2.1-2.23) tends to have the same associations with individual offerings or prayers, or in being an actual representation of a single worshipper as Type 1. But the act of decorating such a small object requires great skill, and the creation of Eye-Idols with chest designs or headwear would require more time and more skilled artisans to accomplish\(^\text{317}\). It is therefore predominantly thought in regards to meaning and value, that Type 2 differs generally from Type 1, in that the chest designs and headwear give the Type greater significance, value and meaning\(^\text{318}\).

The designs upon these artefacts could perhaps designate the depiction of different deities, or aspects of a single deity\(^\text{319}\). But it is so far impossible to determine which entity the Eye-Idols are associated with or could represent, so the most common view in academia\(^\text{320}\) is that the Eye-Idols are dedications to an unknown deity. Eye-Idols as votive offerings to an unknown deity represent the worshipper that dedicated the objects via these unique chest designs. The varying forms of decoration could be a stylised and abstract representation of the detailed roles or status within Tell Brak society of the individual associated with dedicating the Eye-Idol\(^\text{321}\).

In the clear majority of examples Eye-Idols either have chest designs or headwear, which is why they have been divided into 2 sub-groups. The only known examples of artefacts having both features are recorded by Mallowan in an artefact photograph (Figures 2.22 and 2.23)\(^\text{322}\), where a larger Eye-Idol is depicted with crown like headwear and three horizontal zig-zag designs upon the chest, whilst the second example has a triangular headpiece and three horizontal zig-zag designs upon the chest. As there are no further examples for comparison, and these artefacts have not appeared again in publication or in accessible museum collections it is difficult to form any strong conclusions, but overall having both forms of decoration likely indicates a higher level of value and significance, perhaps representative of a very important and potent dedication, or a visual representation of a significant individual in Tell Brak society\(^\text{323}\).

\(^{317}\) Matney 1986, 8-9.
\(^{318}\) Matney 1986; Mallowan 1969
\(^{319}\) Matney 1986, 8-9; Oates and Oates 2002; Yaylali 2014.
\(^{320}\) Mallowan 1947, Matney 1986, 8-9; Oates and Oates 2002; Yaylali 2014.
\(^{321}\) O.G.S 1957
\(^{322}\) Mallowan 1965; 40.
\(^{323}\) Mallowan 1965; 41.
2.1 - Eye-Idols with Chest Designs

The find context of the Eye-Idols at Tell Brak suggests that they were cultic objects, and the sacred connotation associated with the artefacts is reinforced through unique examples of chest designs (Figure 2 and 3)\textsuperscript{324}. This is seen on the Eye-Idol with the chest design of an incised Stag surmounted by a Bird (Figure 2.8); this image has commonly been associated with an early representation of the later fertility based Goddess Ninhursag and was used by scholars as evidence of the Eye-Idol’s association with this deity\textsuperscript{325}. Variations of zig-zags are the most common chest design. Where they are seen in similar numbers on later Sumerian and 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} Millennia art they resemble indications of water and represent the God Enki\textsuperscript{326}, but overall there is not enough conclusive evidence to accurately confirm the association of a specific deity\textsuperscript{327}.

Since in all cases the carved designs on Type 2 occur below the neck or stem, and below the common ‘V’ carved at the base of the neck the most likely interpretation is that they represent clothing and adornment\textsuperscript{328}. As previously stated, decoration in this type may be directly linked to concepts such as status, value and roles and these themes were often conveyed through clothing and adornment in artefacts. For example, the complexity of design seen in (Figure 2.6) which combines the zig-zag and dot motifs could be interpreted as representing an individual with higher significance than those depicted by the plainer Type 1. The lack of any indication of male or female genitalia or breasts further supports the view that the Eye-Idols are depicted clothed\textsuperscript{329}, or perhaps cloaked in a large piece of fabric like (Figure 5.2). The idea of the Eye-Idols being cloaked could explain the absence of defined limbs, and all physical representations of gender and nudity.

The view that the Eye-Idols are depicted clothed in a stylised and abstract manner could mean gender that is not observed through physical characteristics, but could be represented via the chest designs, in a way like a symbolic and visual language that is yet to be interpreted. Therefore, this type may in fact be gendered but clothed, the feminine and masculine being dependent upon the designs, but this is only theoretical with no substantial proof\textsuperscript{330}. Eye-Idols with zig-zags (Figures 2.2-2.4) and rows of dots (Figures 2.1 and 2.5) could represent an abstract form of embroidered or woven fabric designs, like that seen on much later more complex

\textsuperscript{324} Mallowan 1947; 1969; 1977.
\textsuperscript{325} Mallowan 1947; 34. KOÇ and TEMÜR 2014
\textsuperscript{326} O.G.S 1957, 41-43.
\textsuperscript{327} Matney 1986.
\textsuperscript{328} Porter 2014, 112-115.
\textsuperscript{329} Matney 1986; Emberling 2002; Yaylali 2014.
\textsuperscript{330} Bréniquet 1996; Van Buren 1955
examples from the region such as the bronze statue of Queen Napirasu from Susa (Figure 5.3), and the seated alabaster statuettes from Mari in Syria (Figure 5.1). Visually the most effective examples that the designs are related to clothing can be seen in (Figure 2.7) in which the Eye-Idol has upon the base a row of vertical lines, likely a representation of a skirt-like panel. A later example which has very similar features such as eye design and decoration can be observed upon on statue 40.156 from the Tell Asmar Hoard dated to the Early Dynastic 1-2 period. (Figure 5.4). An Eye-Idol (Figure 2.10) is decorated with what is clearly a beaded necklace further supporting the view that the artefact type is visually displaying clothing and jewellery.

2.2 - Idols with Head Wear

Some of the earliest views surrounding the Eye-Idols were that hat height, particularly the pointed hats, were in some way phallic and therefore representative of masculine aspects, although this is greatly unsubstantiated. Eye-Idols with headwear (Figure 4) make up the minority of the artefact type, which supports the viewpoint that they represent those with higher status in Tell Brak society. The more ornate the artefact the more significant the assumed meaning and value, and Eye-Idols that are more stylistically complex require greater production time and skill. Therefore, the Eye-Idols with the highest and most decorated headwear are indicative of the status of the devotee themselves, with size and intricacy visually conveying either wealth or power being personified through personal adornment. These hats may be representative of belief in a religious iconographic framework. The most common form of headwear seen is the conical headdress (Figures 2.1, 2.15, 2.18, 2.20). This design is further seen on the larger alabaster and calcite heads also excavated at Tell Brak indicating that this headwear is meant to represent hats. One interpretation is that what appears to be a conical hat may in fact be a simplified version of a turban or wrapped fabric headdress. The other common headdress is the triangular design with horizontal lines (Figures 2.13, 2.16, 2.18). There are no known parallels for this design but the lines could perhaps represent folds or wrapped fabric, although lines could also hold a symbolic significance linked to status or roles in society.

331 Emberling 2002; Yaylali 2014.
332 Mallowan 1947; 34.
333 Mallowan 1947, 1956
334 O.G.S 1957
335 Frankfort 1949, Van Buren 1950.
336 Matney 1986;
337 Mallowan 1947, 89-90.
338 Mallowan 1947; 88-89.
The Eye-Idols in Mallowan’s Plate LI, particularly 43–46, are visually the most striking Eye-Idols observed (Figures 2.21)\textsuperscript{340}. In terms of size they are very large examples and their headwear is extremely ornate and in many cases, unparalleled. The triangular headdresses (Figure 2.21)\textsuperscript{341} appear to be a more complex version of the simpler triangular design which is more prevalent (Figures 2.13, 2.16, 2.18). The largest example on the left (Figure 2.21) has a central line from which smaller angular lines branch off, 44, being slightly smaller, displays a slightly less detailed version of this. The last examples on the right (Figure 2.21)\textsuperscript{342} represent examples of the crown headwear type, except that they are more rectangular and have much more intricate rows of design. Designs such as horizontal rows of incised points, and a layered crown combining dots, zig-zags and wavy lines (Figure 2.21)\textsuperscript{343}. The most difficult aspect is that these Eye-Idols were excavated and recorded but their location has been unknown ever since. Their high quality possibly suggests that that they were given to the Aleppo Museum, but their lack of any kind of presence in later literature and the inability to discover if they are a part of their collection is disappointing\textsuperscript{344}.

Type 3 – Multiple Eye-Idol Type

This type is theorised to represent aspects of a pairing or duo embodying characteristics of being linked or joined in representing the devotee. The joined nature of the artefact supports the notion of representing a shared devotion or even a stylised family group, where roles are determined by size and design. Sub-group 3.2 in-particular on a simple visual level is often seen to represent children, due to the use of differing size, and therefore examples in this sub-group are consistently linked with themes of protection and procreation.

3.1 Multiple Eye-Idols with a Single Body

It is most commonly assumed that, as with the Single Eye-Idol Type, a set of eyes is representative of a single individual or in a more abstract view representative of a single trait, and the Multiple Eye-Idols with a Single Body continue this assumption, in that each set of eyes, of which in this type there can be two or more, each represents one individual (Figures 3.1-3.9)\textsuperscript{345}. A common and

\textsuperscript{340} Mallowan 1947; 158.
\textsuperscript{341} Mallowan 1947; 158.
\textsuperscript{342} Mallowan 1947; 1956; 1969.
\textsuperscript{343} Mallowan 1957, 88.
\textsuperscript{344} Matney 1986, 11-13.
\textsuperscript{345} Mallowan 1947; 1956; 1969.
unique feature of this type is that the multiple necks are often separated by a perforated hole in the examples of pairs (Figures 3.1 and 3.3-3.7). This hole could be a design feature used to show the separation between the necks and define the separate individuals, or perhaps this hole was utilised in attaching the artefact in an upright position within the Eye Temple, or that the Multiple Eye-Idol type with a single body was perhaps worn as a form of adornment like an amulet or devotion. The central nature of this drilled hole suggests that it could have easily allowed the fragile Eye-Idols to be strung. This Type has numerous different interpretations such as the shared or intertwined nature of the body representing the characteristics of an unknown deity with both male and female aspects of procreation, accounting for the genderless nature of the body, but there is not strong enough to confirm this.

As this sub-group most commonly appears as representing a pair, the Eye-Idols may have been utilised as offerings or devotions left by individuals, as direct representations of the devotees and their lives, perhaps representing a husband and wife, a partnership or siblings, with the Eye-Idol itself representing a joint dedication related to gaining shared prosperity, protection and support. The Eye-Idols have not been found in any sites beyond Hamoukar and there are very few artefacts that are similar, but they share some parallels with the Disc-Shaped Figures from Kültepe in Cappadocia, with their single circular bodies and multiple necks and heads, as well as the shared feature of the smaller figure incised upon the body of the larger. This gives rise to the idea that the artefacts at Brak are in fact part of a larger shared iconographic and iconological tradition, as well as indicating that these areas may have been in direct contact, although this can only be speculated.

Within this sub-group the examples of three or more sets of eyes is very rare, although Mallowan does record their existence. The only image of this type is seen in Plate 40 from his 1965 book Early Mesopotamia and Iran. Here the central Eye-Idol in the plate shows a single body with three sets of eyes. On the single body lines have been incised to differentiate the presence of three separate individual Eye-Idols. This Eye-Idol could be representative of a family group or a joint devotion or prayer. Another unique example (Figure 3.9) where the Eye-Idol has a single body and single neck or stem, upon which are three eyes with a single eyebrow. The earliest theories surrounding its function is that it represents a form of religious trinity, but as this Eye-Idol has no similar example for

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346 Van Buren 1950.
347 Goff 1963; Mallowan 1965, 1969
348 Breniquet 1996
349 Eisenberg 2000
351 Crawford 1958; Stein 2012.
352 Mallowan 1965; 41.
353 Mallowan 1947; 138.
comparison, beyond Mallowan’s original report\textsuperscript{354}. It is therefore hard to suggest its meaning. There is no indication that the divinity associated with Tell Brak was linked to the concept of a trinity, and this artefact is only placed in the sub-group of Multiple Eye-Idol with a Single Body as it doesn’t fit comfortably in any other aspect of the typology.

3.2 Multiple Eye-Idol with Smaller Examples upon the body of the Larger

The first form is a larger Eye-Idol with single or multiple smaller Eye-Idols carved upon its chest or body (Figures 3.10-3.14). Some of the most effective examples of this can be seen in (figure 3.11) from the Metropolitan Museum and the Eye-Idol from the National Aleppo Museum DAE 11290143 (Figure 3.10).

A rarer example is recorded by Mallowan, and the only known photograph is recorded in his 1965 textbook ‘Early Mesopotamia and Iran’\textsuperscript{355}. This Eye-Idol has two smaller Eye-Idols of equal size and design incised upon the chest of the larger (Figure 3.12). The exact location of this Eye-Idol is not known, but it is believed it may have been one of the artefacts given to the Aleppo or another Syrian Museum\textsuperscript{356}.

One explanation for these Eye-Idols with this feature of smaller Eye-Idols incised upon the front is that it represents a mother and child figure, or a pregnant woman. Another earlier view is that the larger figure represents an unnamed and undefined ‘Mother Goddess’ and the smaller Eye-Idols represent the devotees. Walter Andrae theorised that this type of Eye-Idol could be representative of worshippers inside a temple, with the Eye-Idols being architectonic features\textsuperscript{357}. Linked to this religious theory is the idea that they are associated with a specific kind of prayer such as protection by the god, with the larger Eye-Idol perhaps representing a larger powerful deity watching over the smaller devotees. Overall the mother and child explanation has no more evidence than any other theory, and without any indication of gender such as a vagina or pubic triangle it can only be assumed, but overall the general theory is plausible. Perhaps a more likely explanation is that these Eye-Idols represent a theme of joint devotions and the smaller Eye-Idols on the larger could be indicative of general familial protection specifically linked to children. The claim that they are linked to children and act as a form of protection is supported by evidence from Hamoukar in a sub-floor baby grave excavated in Area B. Here amongst many other small

\textsuperscript{354} Mallowan 1947.
\textsuperscript{355} Mallowan 1965.
\textsuperscript{356} Matney 1986.
\textsuperscript{357} Andrae 1933; Goff 1963.
finds such as beads and fox shaped seals, was an intact bone Eye-Idol identical to examples found at Tell Brak, in a layer chronologically equivalent to the Tell Brak examples. Having an Eye-Idol-Idol found in grave goods is unique, and supports the view that the Eye-Idols are ritual in nature, used in relation to the divine. The association alone also clearly links them to children and aspects of protection.  

A unique type within this sub-group shares the feature of multiple Eye-Idols with smaller examples upon the larger, except that the second smaller pair of eyes and partial neck sprout from the larger pair of eyes and neck upon the larger Eye-Idol (Figures 3.13-3.14). This case has only been seen across two known examples including 51.59.9 from the Metropolitan Museum Collection (Figure 3.13). The location of the second example (Figure 3.14) cannot be pinpointed, but it was originally recorded in Plate LI as figure 48. No discussion about this subgroup has appeared outside the original excavation report, and even this includes only a minor description of material and design. It is this author’s opinion that, like the larger Eye-Idols with the smaller examples incised upon their body, they could also represent familial aspects or a joint devotion, with the upper Eye-Idol perhaps a representation of a child being carried upon an adult’s back. A more symbolic definition is also possible, as with the other form of Multiple Eye-Idols with a smaller example upon the body of the larger, as a deity watching over an individual worshipper or devotee, represented in a very literal way with the eyes continuing this theme of omnipotence and being watched over.

### 3.3 Decorated Multiple Eye-Idol

One of the most unusual multiple Eye-Idols overall is (Figure 3.18) in that it is a decorated Multiple Eye-Idol with a single body, and the only known example of Type 3 to have headwear. The artefact was badly damaged when excavated, is missing much of the body, and was reconstructed. The left set of eyes has a high triangular hat extending from the eyebrows with two horizontal lines at the base of the hat, whilst the other set of eyes does not have any headwear. This Eye-Idol supports the explanation that they represent a couple or partnership. A common association is that the artefact is representative of a husband and wife, or on a more basic level the masculine and feminine, with the likely male wearing the triangular headwear which could be interpreted as phallic in representation. The headwear could also indicate the

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359 Mallowan 1947; 138.
360 Mallowan 1947, 88-89.
361 Breniquet 1996.
362 Crawford 1958.
higher status of an individual in the partnership, or perhaps represent a priest or initiated individual with a non-initiated civilian. On a more symbolic level the artefact could also depict a devotee in communion or connection with a deity\textsuperscript{363}, but, as with many of the explanations surrounding the Eye-Idols, this is speculative.

From the British Museum Collection (Figure 3.16) depicts the Multiple Eye-Idol Type where a smaller example is incised upon the body of the larger below the common ‘V’ design carved at the base of the neck. Uniquely the chest designs are seen not on the larger example as is common, but instead there are two groups, one positioned on each side of eight vertical striations, a group of four on each side of the chest of the smaller Eye-Idol. This design pattern is very uncommon as this sub-group of artefact is not commonly decorated, making this Eye-Idol difficult to define. The smaller, almost identical, Eye-Idol is carved on the front of the body of the larger, also with identically stylised eyes on a neck, with the ‘V’ carving at its base. The smaller Eye-Idol also has eight evenly spaced vertical striations on its chest. This may be a stylized depiction of a mother and child, the striations on the smaller Eye-Idol representing the feet of a child seated on a mother’s lap\textsuperscript{364}. The smaller figure could also represent a child in the womb, which supports the view that the Eye-Idols could be related to fertility, the eyes perhaps symbolising the deity watching over the expectant mother and child\textsuperscript{365}. The large numbers of such Eye-Idols (Figure 3.10-3.14) from Tell Brak makes this very plausible. This idea is also supported by the common and widespread nature of such imagery in Mesopotamian and Anatolian artefacts\textsuperscript{366}.

Decorated examples of the Multiple Eye-Idol with a single body is seen in (Figures 3.15-3.18). Both Eye-Idols have the common two sets of eyes on stems sprouting from a single body, except that in the case from the British Museum (Figure 3.15) the necks of the Eye-Idols are separated by a drilled circular hole which is a common feature of the artefact type. Upon the single body of both examples there are three horizontal wavy zig-zags, which is the most common chest design across the Tell Brak Eye-Idol. Another example with this same chest design (Figure 3.17) is a larger Eye-Idol with a smaller Eye-Idol conveyed by neck or stem and single set of eyes sprouting from the head area of the larger. The larger Eye-Idol has the common three horizontal zig-zag chest designs. This Eye-Idol is the only known decorative example of this type.

\textsuperscript{363} Van Buren 1950.
\textsuperscript{363} Goff 1963; Mallowan 1965, 1969.
\textsuperscript{364} Mallowan 1947; 1965; Goff 1963.
\textsuperscript{365} Mallowan 1947, 1956.
\textsuperscript{366} Douglas Van Buren 1955, 165-172.
Conclusions

Eye-Idols are a phenomenon unique to the site of Tell Brak and to a far lesser extent to the site of Tell Hamoukar. Despite extensive excavations at other contemporary sites in the surrounding region such as Hacinebi Tepe, Tepe Gawra, Uruk and Arslantepe they have only been found at these two sites.

The fact that this artefact type is primarily found at Tell Brak supports the more modern view that Northern Mesopotamia from the Chalcolithic into the Uruk period was developing independently and, at some sites like Tell Brak, earlier than sites in the South. Thus, it is highly plausible that the Eye-Idols are an example of a unique regional development both in artistic style, and in cultic meaning conceived at the site of Tell Brak, and shared to a lesser extent to Tell Hamoukar. The Eye-Idols can be viewed as evidence of increasing societal complexity not only in creation of stone artefacts, but also in terms of ideology and religion. The ability to create such a complex and diverse range of artefacts supports the view of increased societal development, complexity and organisation, as the Eye-Idols are a highly unusual and complex phenomenon.

The Eye-Idols at Tell Brak and Hamoukar are mainly found in religious contexts. The fact that the majority were found ritually deposited in the Grey Eye-Temple, with one in an infant’s grave in Hamoukar indicates that they held significance to the societies in which they were present, in being associated with the place of worship, and to be kept with a child during death. This suggests that these Idols were representative of the devotees and were directly linked to the deity or deities associated with the Eye-Temple complex. There have also been smaller examples found in domestic contexts, in pits and with caches of other small finds such as beads, amulets and seals. Overall this is not unusual as if the Idols are associated directly with the lives of the worshippers, with the type being specific indicators of aspects of their prayers or lives. That they have been being found in the domestic sphere indicates that their presence would link the temple and perhaps the deity with those in the household. As previously stated, the Idols represented the worshippers or aspects of their lives so the presence in the home could act as protection of the deity, with the eyes perhaps embodying the concept of being watched over, omnipotence and protection from an all-seeing divinity.

Chronological and stratigraphical understanding of the context of the Eye-Idols at Tell Brak and Hamoukar adds depth to forming a cohesive and balanced study of the artefact type. It also allows for a better judgement on published sources depending on whether the authors have correctly discussed context as part of their analysis. The Eye-Idols are often just referred to as offerings found in the Eye-Temple of Tell Brak.

References:

367 Ur 2007; Ur 2010; Stein 2012.
368 Emberling 2002, Emberling and Macdonald 2001
369 Reichel 2009.
370 Ur 2007.
371 McGuire Gibson, Sanders, and Carrie Hritz 2002
372 Matney 1986, 7-10.
373 Mallowan 1947.
the Eye-Idols are not just found in temple complexes, but also occasionally in probably domestic contexts. This supports the view that not only are they an extremely complex artefact type, but they also probably functioned as objects directly linked to the lives of the worshippers at Tell Brak. As votive offerings, they perhaps represented the worshippers themselves, or at least an aspect of their individual lives. Idols in domestic contexts can be interpreted as being items used to directly link the domestic sphere of daily life with the religious sphere of the Grey Eye-Temple where they are found in bulk. In terms of the Hamoukar bone examples found in an infant burial this supports the interpretation that they are directly associated with the family, and in particularly children, as well as holding more significant ritual value.

To conclude, there is no doubt that the Eye-Idols of Tell Brak, and of Hamoukar, are versions of the same artefact type as the design and material are both shared. It is also clear that looking at the wider context of northern Mesopotamia and surrounding regions there are numerous parallels seen in design, and the use of the prominent eye feature. However, Eye-Idols are to be considered an phenomenon indigenous to Tell Brak and surrounding sites such as Hamoukar. It is possible that further excavations at other sites in the Khabur Basin could reveal further Eye-Idols in the Early to Middle northern Uruk strata. This is because it is rare for any artefact type or artistic technique to evolve without it being at a later point dispersed, shared or copied. But it must be noted that Tell Brak is at this point in time to be viewed as the point of origin, as it holds not only the highest number of Eye-Idols but the greatest variety, and as previously discussed the later strata of the Eye Temple reveals a continuation of this imagery.

Spectacle Idols and Eye-Idols from Tell Brak and Tell Hamoukar are commonly linked, with examples found in the same stratigraphic layers at Tell Brak and at Tell Hamoukar as Eye-Idols. Spectacle Idols have also been excavated in contemporary Middle Northern Uruk stratigraphy and earlier at numerous sites. Overall it is concluded that stone Spectacle Idol examples at Tell Brak and Tell Hamoukar should be viewed as simpler variations of the Eye-Idol Artefact Type, based on chronology, stratigraphy, material and overall design. Coarse Clay examples should be accepted as unrelated utilitarian tools most probably involved in weaving and textile production, and not linked to Eye-Idols beyond slight visual similarities as they hold no conclusive religious value and Eye-Idols are never made of clay, only bone and stone.

The general common feature of accentuating the eye either through carving or colouration clearly indicates that the Idols were a part of a wider societal and cultural trend within the 4th millennium BCE in Northern Mesopotamia. Sources:

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374 McGuire Gibson, Sanders, and Carrie Hritz 2002; Gibson 2000; Emberling and McDonald 2003.
375 Emberling and McDonald 2003
376 Stein 2012.
377 Yaylali 2014
Mesopotamia, indicating that the region may have been highly connected with interlinked shared ideas and designs. But overall Spectacle Idols in their clay form are not be characterised as Eye-Idols, whilst stone examples, particularly from Tell Brak and Tell Hamoukar, should be related to the Eye-Idols more closely as earlier and simpler variations. The wider spread coarse clay examples should be seen as functional and utilitarian and only coincidentally visually similar.

In terms of function and meaning it is concluded that the Eye-Idols existed as votive offerings, which were intentionally discarded in the Grey Eye-Temple as a part of an unknown ritual when the temple was no longer used, and subsequently filled\textsuperscript{379}. As seen in the Typology section, forming conclusions as to the meaning of the Eye-Idols remains highly speculative, but in-depth focus upon the chest designs and headwear indicates that these features were used to add iconographic significance via stylised depictions of clothing and ornamentation, with the more ornate chest designs and headwear adding value, importance and perhaps potency. Each Eye-Idol type has been previously discussed in greater depth but overall the artefacts were most probably representations of, or directly linked to the lives of, the worshippers of Brak, representing aspects like a singular dedication, a dedication on behalf of a couple or pair, or as a representation of an adult and child. Overall the type of Idol designates a specific aspect of the worship or prayer, and the Idols represented the relationships of the worshippers with an unknown deity or deities.

There have been several suggestions of specific deities that might have been associated with the Eye Idols such as Ninhursag, Ishtar, Inanna or an unknown divinity represented by the stylised symbol of the eye, but without further conclusive knowledge this aspect of the debate must remain open\textsuperscript{380}. The best conclusion is that the Eye-Idols are directly related to a deity or deities that are linked with the eye, literally or figuratively, embodying aspects of omnipotence and being protected and watched over.

Hands on study of the Nicholson Museum collection has provided new insights. Close examination of breakage has illustrated the variety of different conditions present in the artefacts themselves, which is useful to the observer, as insights can be gained into the different qualities and types of stones used in the artefact type and how they have survived. Thus far it has been concluded that the Idols were not intentionally broken pre-deposition. Most were probably broken because of the pressures placed on the Idols during deposition. This is concluded from noting that the points of breakage occur at the thinnest and most carved points on the artefacts, such as the eye sections and edges. The material of the artefacts has also been linked to breakage. It is often theorised that some of the Eye-Idols were exposed to burning to darken the outside fabric, and where breakage is present the difference in internal colour appears to prove this. The artefacts in this category tend to be more brittle and prone to breakage.

\textsuperscript{379} Oates 2002; Emberling 2002.
\textsuperscript{380} Frankfort 1949, 195-197; Mallowan 1947; 34. KOÇ and TEMÜR 2014
In terms of valuable new observations artefact NM50.288 (Figure 1.25 and Appendix 2: NM50.288) provides fresh insights into manufacture, as on the back of the eye section a carved ‘v’ like incision appears to show the beginnings of early carvings. But the sharp design indicates it is imperfect, and instead the idol was turned over and carving was retried. The next major insight observed through the first-hand study was that out of the fifteen Idols examined both visually and tactilely, five artefacts, NM59.17, NM59.18, NM66.132, NM50.291 and NM66.134, have unusual shallow but still clearly visible lines that span the length of the sides of each artefact. It is concluded that the lines could be the result of wear patterns during initial carving, where the idol may have been placed in an apparatus, or that the Idols may have been displayed in a stand.

Much more research is needed, and it is acknowledged that the conclusions and discussions presented in this study may be disproved in the future, but without the ability to further excavate within the region in the close future, greater attention needs to be applied to museum collections. It is acknowledged that the text ‘Tell Brak 3’ which will outline the most recent unpublished work at the site of Tell Brak in the 4th Millennium BCE is not released, that not all museum collections in the Middle East have been digitised, and financial and time constraints prevented the viewing of a more comprehensive number of artefacts. The Eye-Idols remain in many ways a unique mystery, yet to be fully unravelled.
Appendix 1: Figures

Figure 1
Figure 4
Type 1 – Single Eye-Idol Type
Figure 1.9

Figure 1.10

Figure 1.11

Figure 1.12

Figure 1.13

Figure 1.14

Figure 1.15

Figure 1.16

Figure 1.17
Eye-Idol Type – Fragments

Figure 1.36

Figure 1.37

Figure 1.38

Figure 1.39

Figure 1.40
Type 2 – Decorated Single Eye-Idol Type – Idols with Chest Designs
Figure 2.10
Type 2 – Decorated Single Eye-Idol Type – Idols with Head Wear
Type 3 – Multiple Eye-Idol Type – Multiple Eye-Idols with a Single Body
Type 3 – Multiple Eye-Idol Type – Multiple Eye-Idols with Smaller Examples Upon the Larger
Type 3 – Multiple Eye-Idol Type – Decorated Multiple Eye-Idols

Figure 3.15

Figure 3.16

Figure 3.17

Figure 3.18
Spectacle Idols – Stone Examples
Spectacle Idols – Coarse Clay Examples

Figure 4.17

Figure 4.18

Figure 4.19

Figure 4.20

Figure 4.21

Figure 4.22

Figure 4.23
Figure 4.31

Figure 4.32
Other Sources

Figure 5.1

Figure 5.2

Figure 5.3

Figure 5.4
### Table I. Chronological Framework

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Figure 5.8
### Appendix 2: Nicholson Museum Eye-Idol Catalogue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catalogue Number</th>
<th>NM50.287</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Measurements</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Height</td>
<td>5.88cm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Width</td>
<td>2.64cm</td>
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<td>Depth</td>
<td>0.48cm</td>
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**General Information**

Excavated by M.E.L. Mallowan from the Eye Temple at Tell Brak, Northern Syria, during 1937-1938 excavations.


Dated to the 4th Millennium BCE.

Material is identified as alabaster.

**Description**

Single Eye-Idol type, made of alabaster with dark uneven colouration, the back of the artefact is blotchy and uneven in colour. This dark colouring is perhaps indicative of burning which likely occurred pre-deposition, but the porous nature of the stone could have also caused the darker colouring during deposition.

The Idol has a squat, and square body, with a slight bulge carved into the neck. The artefact is shown with what is generally labelled as a triangular head piece with 4 horizontal lines carved upon it. The headpiece appears as an extension of the eye section.

**First Hand Observations**

Upon observing the artefact first hand, both a visual and physical examination was undertaken. The front and back of the Eye-Idol are equally smooth, the sides of the head are rougher than any other point of the artefact. This was unexpected as the earliest descriptions generally note that the back of the artefact is usually rough and untouched.

The neck area is polished smooth, with a slight protrusion on each side. The protrusions on the neck appear to be an intentional design rather than crude carving. This feature is unique as far as reliable research sources can ascertain. The exact purpose of these protrusions is unclear, but perhaps this feature could be indicative of neckwear or a garment, or a just an imperfection of the design.
**Catalogue Number**  
NM50.288

**Measurements**  
Height: 3.55cm  
Width: 2.66cm  
Depth: 0.8cm

**General Information**  
Excavated by M.E.L. Mallowan from the Eye Temple at Tell Brak, Northern Syria, during 1937-1938 excavations.  
Dated to the 4th Millennium BCE.  
Material is identified as crystalline alabaster.

**Description**  
Single Eye-Idol type, made of white crystalline alabaster with yellow inclusions. The artefact is considered a small example in terms of height at 3.55cm, but thicker than average at 0.8 cm. The Eye-Idol has the common feature of the single set of eyes, along with the ‘V’ design carved at the base of the neck; which is perhaps indicative of a garment or neckpiece. The front has minor damage in the form of scratches and a deep gouge.

**First Hand Observations**  
The back and sides of the artefact are rough. The front of the artefact is the smoothest surface, but by no means is it polished smooth. When viewed in detail the small size is very noticeable, as is the thickness. It is probable the artefact is thick because of its small size, as working with a thinner surface area would be extremely difficult.  
Another unique feature was observed on the back of the artefact behind the eyes. On the top right side, there is a deep incised design, like an upside down ‘V’. The significance of this is not clear but it can be assumed from the neat edges that the carving is intentional. Perhaps this occurred during manufacture, as the carving on the back mirrors part of the eyebrow that sits above the complete eyes carved on the front of the artefact.
Catalogue Number
NM50.289

Measurements
Height: 6.5cm
Width: 4.4cm
Depth: 0.6cm

General Information
Excavated by M.E.L. Mallowan from the Eye Temple at Tell Brak, Northern Syria, during 1937-1938 excavations.
Acquired by the Nicholson Museum as a donation of a group of 6 Eye-Idols from the Institute of Archaeology, London 1950

Dated to the 4th Millennium BCE.
Material is identified as crystalline alabaster.

Description
Single Eye-Idol Type, made of crystalline alabaster of a cream colour with yellow inclusions. The size of the artefact is considered average in terms of height and depth when compared to others of the same type. The body of the artefact is very square, with angular shoulders of slightly uneven height, a feature uncommon for the artefact type which usually characterised by more rounded features. The artefact has the common ‘V’ design carved at the base of the neck; which is perhaps indicative of a garment or neckpiece. The chest also has a further design of 2 clusters of 3 inverted ‘V’s carved on each side, the meaning which is undefined. The eyes are damaged having been broken, and later restored. The entire artefact is highly polished on all sides and surfaces, and the stone is of high quality.

First Hand Observations
The Idol is only 0.6cm thick but the carving is unusually deep. Close examination of the carving of the eye section and chest designs carving is to be considered noteworthy and extremely impressive considering the Eye-Idol is only 0.6cm thick. When held to the light these carvings appear to stand out brightly, possibly supporting the theory that these idols may have been stood up for display, so the carvings could be accentuated. The clusters of inverted ‘V’ designs on the chest could represent breasts or ribs, or even ridges in the landscape. But the similarity to the ‘V’ at the base of the neck could also mean they represent a design on a garment.
Catalogue Number
NM50.291

Measurements
Height: 6.58cm
Width: 4.5cm
Depth: 0.64cm

General Information
Excavated by M.E.L. Mallowan from the Eye Temple at Tell Brak, Northern Syria, during 1937-1938 excavations. Acquired by the Nicholson Museum as a donation of a group of 6 Eye-Idols from the Institute of Archaeology, London 1950
Dated to the 4th Millennium BCE.
Material is identified as crystalline alabaster.

Description
Single Eye-Idol Type, made of crystalline alabaster of a yellowish colour with white and brownish inclusions. The size of the artefact is considered average in terms of height and depth when compared to others of the same type. The body of the artefact is tapered, becoming wide at the base. The shoulders are slanted upwards towards the neck giving a more realistic appearance of a human form. The neck has been damaged and then heavily reconstructed, but the common ‘V’ design carved at the base of the neck can still be observed. The Idol wears a head piece with 3 distinct rounded ridges, the smallest being the central. Within this headpiece there has been carved 2 wide horizontal ‘V’ like lines, echoed by the shape of the eye and eyebrow it sits above.

First Hand Observations
The reconstruction around the neck area and the back of the Idol, makes it very difficult to make any in-depth observations. It is difficult to differentiate between reconstruction, carved design and natural features of the stone. The dark colourations on the back of the idol stand out, but whether they are a part of the reconstruction, or a natural inclusion in the stone is indeterminate. The quality of the back of the artefact is very rough compared to the front which is crudely polished. On close observation of the right side of the Idol it can just be seen what appears to be a lightly carved partial line or groove, but its proximity to the reconstruction makes further exploration and explanation difficult and inaccurate, but it is assumed that this line could be unrelated to damage or the late repair, and perhaps a feature like that on NM59.17, NM59.18, NM66.132, NM50.291 and NM66.134.
Catalogue Number
NM50.293

Measurements
Height: 4.02cm
Width: 4.1cm
Depth: 0.55cm

General Information
Material is identified as crystalline alabaster. Dated to the Jemdet Nasr Period but based on the style and context they are to be dated from the mid to late 4th Millennium BCE.

Description
Multiple Eye-Idol with a single body, made of crystalline alabaster. The colour is very dark, almost black in some places. The uneven greyish-black colouration, particularly on the back of the artefact could be indicative of burning, or staining from deposition, but without scientific testing this cannot be confirmed. The artefact has a single body which is roughly square, tapering slightly toward the top. There are 2 necks and 2 pairs of eyes that are all carved from the single piece of stone. The necks are separated by a drilled circular hole which has been smoothed. This hole may perhaps have been used to support the artefact upright, or for it to be strung and perhaps worn. The outer side of the necks has been carved with detail to show depth. The bottom left corner of the artefact has been broken, and later reconstructed.

First Hand Observations
The artefact is an extremely uneven greyish-black in colour, up close it seems likely that the artefact was burnt. The front of the Idol is lightly polished, whilst the back and sides are rough. Overall the artefact is quite rough and discoloured when compared to others found in the collection. Another unique feature is on the back of the figure and was only clearly noticeable during first-hand observation. Not only is the back unpolished, but it has a large horizontal groove carved approximately in the centre of the back. Being above the damaged corner, it can be assumed that this groove is not a part of the reconstruction and repair. This begs the question as to whether this is an intended design, or an inclusion in the stone? It is believed that this groove was present pre-burning as the inner section of the groove is darkened. It is possible that the groove may have been formed during the production process as a part of an apparatus used to hold the stone during the engraving process. Or perhaps the groove is indicative of the artefact being held upright in a form of stand.
Catalogue Number
NM59.16

Measurements
Height: 5.1cm
Width: 3.6cm
Depth: 0.5cm

General Information
Excavated by M.E.L. Mallowan from the Eye Temple at Tell Brak, Northern Syria, during 1937-1938 excavations. Acquired as 1 of a group of 3 through purchased by the Nicholson Museum in 1959. Material is identified as crystalline alabaster. Dated to the Jemdet Nasr Period but based on the style and context they are to be dated from the mid to late 4th Millennium BCE.

Description
Single Eye-Idol Type, made of crystalline alabaster of a cream colour with yellowish inclusions. The artefact has the usual features of the standard Eye-Idol Type featuring a rectangular body tapering in the base, the single set of eyes and the common ‘V’ design carved at the base of the neck; perhaps indicative of a garment or neckpiece. The left eye has darker colouration, possibly an inclusion in the stone or a repair.

First Hand Observations
There is group of vertical scratches on the front of the artefact. Upon investigating the back of the figure, it becomes evident that the discolouration of the eyes is likely the result of some form of previous minor reconstruction. On the back of the body of the artefact there is also a very large area of rough stone and discolouration, which was not observable from the artefacts front. This could either the result of reconstruction or a very large inclusion in the alabaster.
Catalogue Number
NM59.17

Measurements
Height: 5.4cm
Width: 3.9cm
Depth: 0.6cm

General Information
Excavated by M.E.L. Mallowan from the Eye Temple at Tell Brak, Northern Syria, during 1937-1938 excavations.
Acquired as 1 of a group of 3 through purchase by the Nicholson Museum in 1959.
Material is identified as crystalline alabaster. Dated to the Jemdet Nasr Period but based on the style and context they are to be dated from the mid to late 4th Millennium BCE.

Description
Single Eye-Idol Type, made of crystalline alabaster of a white colour with brownish inclusions. Smaller in terms of height then is considered average at 5.4cm. The artefact has the usual features of the standard Eye-Idol Type featuring a rectangular body tapering in from the base, the single set of eyes, and having the common ‘V’ design carved at the base of the neck; which is perhaps indicative of a garment or neck piece.
The most unique feature of the artefact is the design carved on the chest, in the form three horizontal ‘M’ like. The engraved eyes and chest designs stand out, as they are discoloured with a dark substance, although whether this is an intentional feature or discolouration that has arisen over time is uncertain.

First Hand Observations
Both the back and front of the artefact has been polished smooth, whilst the sides are rougher. One unique observation made during extremely close examination of the sides of the Idol, is the presence of a lightly carved groove running vertically around the side. This was first noticed by touch, and when examined visually it became evident that it was present on both sides of the Idol, although faintly along the length of the body, but not the base or top. The exact meaning and function of this groove is uncertain. Perhaps it is like the groove on NM59.17, NM59.18, NM66.132, NM50.291 and NM66.134, in that the groove may have been formed during the production process as a part of an apparatus used to hold the stone during the engraving process. It might also be indicative of the artefact being held upright in a form of stand.
Catalogue Number
NM59.18

Measurements
Height: 5.7cm
Width: 4.6cm
Depth: 0.8cm

General Information
Excavated by M.E.L. Mallowan from the Eye Temple at Tell Brak, Northern Syria, during 1937-1938 excavations.
Acquired as 1 of a group of 3 through purchase by the Nicholson Museum in 1959.
Material is identified as crystalline alabaster. Dated to the Jemdet Nasr Period but based on the style and context they are to be dated from the mid to late 4th Millennium BCE.

Description
Single Eye-Idol Type, made of crystalline alabaster of a yellowish white colouration. The artefact has the usual features of the Standard Eye-Idol Type featuring a rectangular body tapering in from the base, the single set of eyes, and having the common ‘V’ design carved at the base of the neck; perhaps indicative of a garment or neck piece. The most unique feature of the artefact is the design carved on the top half of the chest. Four horizontal rows of dots carved at almost equal intervals, approximately 30 in total. The base of the artefact has been broken off and later reconstructed.

First Hand Observations
The sides, and both the back and front of the artefact have been polished smooth. Examination of the significant reconstruction on the base of the artefact, shows that some of these dots which make up the chest design have been lost after the artefact was broken.
On the right-hand side of the artefact upon the original remaining part of the stone, the presence of a lightly carved groove running vertically around the side is observed. This feature was first noticed by touch. When examined visually it became evident that it was present very faintly on both sides of the Idol. The exact meaning and function of this groove is uncertain but it may be the same as the grooves on NM59.17, NM59.18, NM66.132, NM50.291 and NM66.134, which may have been formed during the production process, or designed to support the figure in a stand.
Catalogue Number
NM66.132

Measurements
Height: 4.35cm
Width: 2.69cm
Depth: 0.77cm

General Information
Excavated by M.E.L. Mallowan from the Eye Temple at Tell Brak, Northern Syria, during 1937-1938 excavations. Acquired through purchase by the Nicholson Museum in 1966. Dated to the Middle of the 4th Millennium BCE. Material is identified as alabaster.

Description
Single Eye-Idol type made of crystalline alabaster of a white colour with yellowish brown inclusions. The artefact is of average size and has the usual features of a Single Eye-Idol Type. It has a rectangular body tapering in from the base, the single set of eyes, and having the common ‘V’ design carved at the base of the neck; which is perhaps indicative of a garment or neck piece.

First Hand Observations
The back of the artefact is rough and heavily calcified and has a very white colouration, whilst the front of the artefact is polished smooth. There is a lightly carved groove running vertically around both sides of the Idol. The exact meaning and function of this groove is uncertain. But it may be the same as the grooves on artefacts NM59.17, NM59.18, NM66.132, NM50.291 and NM66.134.
Catalogue Number
NM66.134

Measurements
Height: 4.6cm
Width: 2.8cm
Depth: 0.62cm

General Information
Excavated by M.E.L. Mallowan from the Eye Temple at Tell Brak, Northern Syria, during 1937-1938 excavations.
Acquired through purchase by the Nicholson Museum in 1966. Dated to the Middle of the 4th Millennium BCE. Material is identified as alabaster.

Description
Single Eye-Idol Type made of crystalline alabaster of a translucent white colour with brown colourations. The artefact is of average size and has the usual features of the Standard Eye-Idol Type. It has a rectangular body tapering in from the base, with the single set of eyes, and having the common ‘V’ design carved at the base of the neck; which is perhaps indicative of a garment or neckpiece. In terms of style the Idol has narrower eyes than is usual, and the neck is quite thick and squat.

First Hand Observations
The material used for the idol is highly translucent. What first appear to be brown inclusions in the stone are in some areas calcification. The back of the artefact is rough and heavily calcified, whilst the front of the artefact is polished smooth. On the back of the artefact, from the right shoulder to halfway down the body there are approximately 7 slanted striations of equal length and distance. The exact meaning of this unique feature is uncertain, and it has not been referenced on any other Eye-Idols. Perhaps it is a form of label, or representative of ribs. There is the common presence of the lightly carved groove running vertically around the side. The exact meaning and function of this groove is uncertain. Perhaps it is like the groove on NM59.17, NM59.18, NM66.132, NM50.291 and NM66.134.
Catalogue Number
NM50.294

Measurements
Height: 4.39cm
Width: 4.82m
Depth: 1.03cm

General Information
Excavated by M.E.L. Mallowan from the Eye Temple at Tell Brak, Northern Syria, during 1937-1938 excavations.
Acquired by the Nicholson Museum in 1950 as a donation from the Institute of Archaeology in London.
Material is identified as crystalline alabaster. Dated to the Jemdet Nasr Period but based on the style and context they are to be dated from the mid to late 4th Millennium BCE.

Description
The artefact is a fragment of Single Eye-Idol Type. The artefact is made of crystalline alabaster of cream colour with brown colourations. All that remains is the eye section and a part of the neck. As the body is missing any unique designs cannot be determined, but from the symmetry and quality if the carving of the eyes it can be assumed that the original intact Idol would have been of high quality.

First Hand Observations
The artefact is markedly smooth. It has been polished across all sides, including within the carved sections. It is also large and unusually thick at 1.03cm at its widest point. The fragment from the bottom of the broken neck to top of the eyebrow is 4.39cm high which in many examples studied across numerous museum and university collections, including the Nicholson Museum is often considered the entire height of a smaller sized intact Eye-Idol. Since it is common across the artefact type for the eye section and neck to take up on average approximately one third of the entire size of the artefact it can be suggested that this Eye-Idol intact would have been close to 13cm. If this was the case then it would have been a very large example of an Eye-Idol, perhaps indicating its importance or value.
Catalogue Number  
NM66.133

Measurements  
Height: 4.95cm  
Width: 3.02cm  
Depth: 0.6cm

General Information  
Dated to the Middle of the 4th Millennium BCE.

Description  
Single Eye-Idol Type likely made of alabaster or gypsum of a greyish colour with brown colourations, perhaps an indication of burning. But the exact stone has not been identified by the Museum. The artefact is of average size at 4.95cm in height, and appears to have the usual features of the Standard Eye-Idol Type. The artefact features a rectangular body tapering in from the base, with the single set of eyes, and having the common ‘V’ design carved at the base of the neck; which is perhaps indicative of a garment or neck piece. But these features are only just visible to the naked eye as the condition of the idol overall is very poor.

First Hand Observations  
The artefact is completely intact but the surface on both the front and back is in a very poor condition, being rough and uneven. This present state is likely due to the type of stone used in the manufacture of the Idol, which is most likely a form of soft alabaster or gypsum but are they not all made of this?  
The Eye Idol is now heavily worn with calcification build-up which has caused the formation of large protrusions, many being identified during a tactile examination particularly of the back of the artefact. The state of wear and encrustation has resulted in the engraved designs such as the eye section and the ‘V’ design being nearly completely worn away and obscured, making further identification of designs and further observations difficult.
Catalogue Number
NM50.290

Measurements
Height: 5.1cm
Width: 4cm
Depth: 0.69cm

General Information

Description
Double Eye-Idol Type, made of crystalline alabaster. The uneven greyish-black colouration, particularly on the left side of the Idol which is much darker could be indicative of burning. The artefact has a single body which is roughly square, tapering slightly toward the top. There are 2 necks and 2 pairs of eyes that are attached, the necks being perforated by a small circular hole. The overall condition of the artefact is extremely poor, with the left side being damaged and uneven, missing chunks, as is the base edge. Across the front and back of the artefact there are deep scratches and scarring.

First Hand Observations
The condition of the artefact is very poor, with deep gouges and scratches across the front and back surfaces, along with broken edges. The darker colouration of the stone, particularly upon the left side has been attributed to intentional burning. From a tactile examination, it is noted that the stone is not only chalky and rough to the touch but is also brittle, which could be further evidence it has been exposed to high temperatures. The left side has the most damage, and when viewed from the back this becomes even more apparent with a large gouge being observed, and the uneven nature of the corners and base very visible. It is also noted that the eye section has been snapped off and has been reattached, an observation not clear from the front.
Catalogue Number
NM50.292

Measurements
Height: 2.35cm
Width: 3.32cm
Depth: 0.5cm

General Information
Excavated by M.E.L. Mallowan from the Eye Temple at Tell Brak, Northern Syria, during 1937-1938 excavations.
Acquired by the Nicholson Museum as a donation from the Institute of Archaeology, London 1950.
Material is identified as crystalline alabaster. Dated to the Jemdet Nasr Period but based on the style and context they are to be dated from the mid to late 4th Millennium BCE.

Description
The artefact is a fragment of what is believed to be an example of the Single Eye Idol Type. The artefact is of a greyish brown colour with lighter colourations. As a fragment the Eye Idol is what remains of the eye section, with headwear. As the body is missing no unique designs can be identified. The engraved head piece has three distinct rounded ridges. The smallest, central, ridge has a wide horizontal 'w' like design, echoing the shape of the eye and eyebrow it sits above. From the symmetry and quality of the carving of the eyes, and the complexity of the head piece it can be assumed that the Idol overall would have been of high quality.

First Hand Observations
The most notable feature is the overall quality of the artefact. The thickness of the Idol is only 0.5cm, which is thinner than average, and the carved design of the eyes and the head piece are very deep. This deep carving and the highly-polished nature of the fragment indicates that when the artefact was originally intact it would have been of very high quality. This is emphasised by the detailed carving of the head piece which is only 0.6cm in height, which includes not only a carved outline of the 3 rounded ridges, but also the internal design of the stylised ‘W’ like line. The colouration of the stone is also significant as like numerous other examples it is a dark grey, with a mottled uneven colouration across the front. This may be indicative of intentional burning, like other examples in the Nicholson’s collections, unsure if post or pre-depositional.
Catalogue Number
NM66.135

Measurements
Height: 4.89cm
Width: 2.8cm
Depth: 0.7cm

General Information
Excavated by M.E.L. Mallowan from the Eye Temple at Tell Brak, Northern Syria, during 1937-1938 excavations. Acquired by the Nicholson Museum in 1966 as a donation from the British Museum. Dated to the 4th Millennium BCE.
Material is identified as stone which is correct, but specifically it is likely a type of porous alabaster.

Description
The artefact is an example of the Single Eye Idol Type. The colouration of the artefact is an uneven greyish brown, with numerous lighter inclusions. Overall the Eye Idol is in a very poor condition with extensive surface damage. There are fragments missing from the edges of the eye section, and lower right corners of the base. Weathering has nearly worn the carving of the eye section away, along with any further designs if they were present. But despite the condition it can still be observed that the artefact has the common feature of the single set of eyes, along with the ‘V’ design carved at the base of the neck; which is perhaps indicative of a garment or neckpiece.

First Hand Observations
The stone used is probably alabaster and this example has porous qualities along with a high silicone content which has resulted in extensive weathering and breakage. The artefact is extremely rough and pockmarked to the touch. The back of the artefact across the eye and neck section is very weathered and calcified, and this is observable from the whitish discolouration.
The overall mottled and uneven greyish brown colouration, with numerous lighter inclusions is quite noticeable. It is unclear if this is due to weathering, burning or staining.
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