



Ancient Cylinder Seals from Upper Mesopotamia

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ABSTRACT

This study examines 14-cylinder seals from the Diyarbakir Archeology Museum. Unfortunately, the museum inventory does not provide any information about their definition, period, or the culture they belong to. To determine their cultural significance, relevant details were presented to the academic community by comparing them with examples and similar items from previously published scientific papers. The seals discussed in this paper were exposed to abrasion, and some have signs of deterioration due to excessive use and scraping. The cylinder seals of this study represent the Akkadian, Old Babylonian, Mitanni, and Assyrian seal arts, depicting scenes from mythology, worship, hunting, and struggles.

Keywords: Cylinder Seal, Akkadian, Old Babylonian, Mitanni, Middle and Neo-Assyrian



Introduction¹

In the ancient Near East, seals were defined as an object used to determine ownership, allowed people to sign documents, ensured the inviolability of goods and properties, and formalized all kinds of business and transactions (Özkan, 2011: 148). These artifacts were typically made of solid materials such as stone, sometimes ivory, bone, glass, tile, metal, wood, hard-dried clay or baked clay (Collon, 1987: 4; Pittman, 1987: 12; Yücel ve Parlütü, 2020: 34). The origin of the seals, which are still actively used today, date to the Neolithic Period. Around 7000 BC, when seals were extensively utilized in the region spanning from Northern Syria to Southeastern Anatolia and Central Anatolia. In the prehistoric period when only stamp seals were produced, they were decorated with geometric patterns and animal scenes (Tsouparopoulou and Casties, 2014: 39). The increased trade of the Neolithic cultures during the Hassuna period coincided with the growing use of seals. Throughout the Halaf period, seals with similar forms and designs continued to be used as a shared artistic concept in the settlements of Southeastern Anatolia, Northern Syria, and Mesopotamia (Özkan, 2001: 16; Özkan, 2011: 148). In the Uruk period, animal scenes were preferred, and a wide variety of animals were represented. Another characteristic of glyptics of this period was the priest-king (Tsouparopoulou and Casties, 2014: 39). With the transition to cylinder seals, important transformations occurred in the Near East trade. One of the most significant indicators of merchants bridging Anatolia and Mesopotamia during the Assyrian Colonial Period were the hundreds of cylinder seal impressions found in Central Anatolian settlements (Özkan, 1993: 501). Cylinder seals continued to be used for the next millennium, eventually ending with the Achaemenid period (Özkan, 2011: 149).

Due to their extensive usage over long periods, seals, despite their small size, gained significant importance in the analysis of political, cultural, and economic relations between different continents and cultures, as well as in understanding the societal roles of humans². Archaeological evidence revealed that cylinder seals became an integral part of daily life in Ancient Mesopotamia and Anatolia. In contrast to royal reliefs or monumental sculptures, these seals depicted events from everyday life. Seals were widely used by individuals ranging from kings to slaves, in daily tasks and correspondence. Production of seals was carried out by specialized seal makers known as “burgul” in Sumerian and “purkullu” in Akkadian

1 This study was conducted with the permission of the Diyarbakır Archaeology Museum, under the auspices of the Directorate of Culture and Tourism of the Governorship of Diyarbakır, Turkey, with permission dated 29.03.2019 and numbered 51045164-155.01-E.272234.

2 For example, the shipwrecks of Uluburun and Gelidonya, dating back to the 13th century BC and originating from Syria, carried various goods belonging to civilizations as distant as Anatolia, Syria, Cyprus, the Baltic, and Egypt. The Gelidonya shipwreck yielded scarab seals associated with Egyptian culture. Additionally, the significance of a mace head fragment bearing the seal of Pharaoh Ramses II, discovered in the vassal kingdom center of Kargamış, held great importance. In Panaztepe, a Mycenaean Age pithos tomb contained two scarabs, with the name of Pharaoh Amenhotep III deciphered on one of them, while another pithos tomb dating back to the 12th century BC contained a single scarab. For more information, refer to Özkan, 2007, 93-94, Fig. 8, 10.

(Dede, 2014: 21; Yücel, & Parlıtı, 2020: 34). Cylinder seals primarily served as objects of prestige. They were preferred over stamp seals, which were previously used in trade, due to their more appealing narrative and religious expressions. Crafted from valuable or semi-precious stones, cylinder seals, especially the finest examples were believed to belong to the royal family, indicating their ownership.

Methodology and Aim


The seals included in the study were organized and described in a catalog. Detailed descriptions, evaluations, and comparisons were provided within the catalog. The examined seals were numbered from one to fourteen and classified according to their chronological and typological characteristics. Consequently, the museum cylinder seals are from the Akkad, Old Babylon, Mitanni, Middle Assyrian, and Neo-Assyrian cultures. To facilitate a description of the objects, terms commonly used in work related to cylinder seals were included in the present study. This study's goal was to examine the correlation between the museum seals by using the previous research of scholars in the field. These seals, believed to have originated from Diyarbakır and its surroundings, which are now housed in the Diyarbakır Museum, depict scenes such as mythological stories, struggles, offerings, and worship. Additionally, these seals served as protective amulets and tools for trade.

When considering the southern and eastern parts of Anatolia, these seals from the Akkadian, Old Babylonian, Mitanni, Middle Assyrian, and Neo-Assyrian civilizations are represented by a small number of examples. From this perspective, this study and similar works are of great importance in understanding and analyzing the belief systems, trade relations, and political structures of these civilizations in the region as a result of their relationships and expansions into Anatolia. With this purpose and following the methodology applied in an evaluation of the seals, the dual or single scenes depicted on the seals are associated with similar examples. Not only the iconography but also the narrative structure and the technique of execution are crucial in this regard. In the cylinder seals discussed in our article, those with dual scenes depict a primary narrative followed by a secondary narrative. For seals with single scenes, the narrative is depicted from left to right, top to bottom, and filler motifs are discussed.

Results and Catalog

The scenes depicted in modern impressions of the seals were arranged chronologically in the catalog headings. The cylinder seals we discuss are introduced starting from the main scene and progressing towards the side scenes. In dual scenes, the artifacts were analyzed from right to left and from top to bottom. It is understood that the photographs of the seals were taken by museum officials in very low resolution. Therefore, to enhance their clarity and comprehensibility, the images have been digitally enhanced and drawings were made.

1. Mythological Scenes

Catalog No: 1	Picture and Drawing No: 1		Museum Inventory Number: 26/47/866
Type: cylinder Seal	Material: Black Hematite Stone	Period: Second half of the 3 rd millennium BC (2500-2100 BC)	Arrival to the Museum: Transfer from the Anatolian Civilizations Museum
Dimensions: length: 2,7 cm, diameter of: 1,2 cm			
Analogues: Ward, 1909: 209; Ornan, Ortiz, & Wolff, 2013: 8; Ökse, 2006: 559; Danişmaz, & Şahin, 2022: 4.			
Definition and Explanation: The upper part of the seal and the figurative area are eroded by time and use. The earliest examples of similar seal scenes were found in Arslantepe VI B Early Bronze Age I A, layers at Aşvan and Norşun Tepe dated to the early 3 rd millennium BC, and in plates from the early 3 rd millennium BC at Amuq G and Tell Brak (Ökse, 2006: 554). The seal was carved with a tool (rasp?) made with very deep cuts. The seal is limited to a single repeated scene. It depicts an animal with an open mouth and stylized leaf motifs on it. In front of the animal is a stylized tree of life. It has a distinct artistic style. The figure is schematically engraved with angular lines, without regard for body proportion or anatomical structure. A close comparison of motifs was made with the decorations on cylinder seals from the Ras-Shamra/Ugarit in Syria (Danişmaz, & Şahin, 2022: 5). The peculiarity of this seal is that instead of the usual method of drilling or cutting into hard micro-quartzite stones such as hematite, chalcedony, jasper or carnelian, the engraver chose the method of carving with a file on a hard stone (Ornan, Ortiz & Wolff, 2013: 7). The cylinder seal impressions consisting of animal and human figures engaged in farming were found on large pottery in the Tell Mardikh G palace, which are thought to store agricultural products because the seals are the same as those described for use by rural agricultural societies. (Ökse, 2006: 555).			
			
Picture and Drawing No: 1			

Catalog No: 2	Picture and Drawing No: 2		Museum Inventory Number: 21/9/10
Type: Cylinder Seal	Material: Serpentine	Period: Akkadian	Arrival to the Museum: Confiscation

Dimensions: length: 3,4 cm, diameter: 1,5 cm

Analogues: Teissier, 1984: 123, 135; Ward, 1909: 34.

Definition and Explanation: The repeating motif of warriors on the cylinder seal originates from the Akkadian and Amorite periods. Typically, it portrays a central composition depicting a struggle between a bull-man-human or a lion-bull-man. However, the seal was reinterpreted, presenting a scene of a human battling a giant serpent. Upon examination of the scene, it becomes evident that Gilgamesh and Enkidu (?) are depicted. Gilgamesh could represent the portrayal of a ruler of animals by gripping the giant serpent with his hand. In fact, an Assyrian Palace relief discovered in Dur-Sharrukin and exhibited in the Louvre Museum, portrays Gilgamesh as the lord of animals, holding a lion in his left arm and a snake in his right hand (Delorme, 1981: 55). Among the naked heroes, a tree of life is prominently depicted along with a saw-shaped tool on the tree. Geometric shapes are used as a filling motif behind the back of the naked hero holding the snake.



Picture and Drawing No: 2

Catalog No: 3	Picture and Drawing No: 3		Museum Inventory Number: 5/5/75
Type: Cylinder Seal	Material: Frit	Period: Akkadian	Arrival to the Museum: Confiscation
Dimensions: length: 2,4 cm, diameter: 1,1 cm			

Analogues: Ward, 1909: 34.

Definition and Explanation: The cylinder seal features a single scene. In the center of the seal, Gilgamesh is depicted as a naked, bearded figure with a belt or sash around his waist. The three curls in Gilgamesh's hair are depicted as triple dots (Rehm, 1994: 269-270). Gilgamesh is shown with his arms outstretched, capturing two bulls. The bulls are standing upright with their heads turned backward. There are figures of a scorpion and a bird (?) among the other figures (Von der Osten, 1934: Cat. 295) The subject matter is similar to seals from the Akkadian period. In figure groups from this period, the figure band was cut in a linear style.



Picture and Drawing No: 3

Catalog No: 4	Picture and Drawing No: 4		Museum Inventory Number: 14/3/12
Type: Cylinder Seal	Material: Black Hematite Stone	Period: Mitanni	Arrival to the Museum: Confiscation

Dimensions: length: 2 cm, diameter: 1,2 cm

Analogues: Teissier, 1984: 123, 135; Ward, 1909: 34; Von der Osten 1934: 147.

Definition and Explanation: The cylinder seal comprises a single repeating scene, where a two-horned deer is seen walking toward the right. On the back of the deer, a smaller human figure is engraved to create a sense of distance. The figure has its arms raised in an adoring manner, while the body of the deer is adorned with geometric zigzag patterns. Between each of the human figures, there are additional geometric-shaped and ladder motifs. Quadruple rosettes are positioned behind the deer to represent the sun. The use of rosettes is a common motif, and they are generally placed for decorative purposes (Von der Osten, 1934: 146-147). Seals in the Mitanni style are divided into two groups by Frankfort, *the popular Mitanni style* (1700-1200 BCE) and *the fully developed Mitanni style* (1500-1350 BCE) (Frankfort, 1939: 273-283). The seal examined in our study was crafted in *the popular Mitanni style*. In *the popular Mitanni style*, single scenes, and figures such as *the tree of life* and *deer* are commonly depicted. These cylinder seals, belonging to the Mitanni culture dating back to the mid-2nd millennium BCE, suffered from wear and tear, excessive use, and second-time engraving. Some of them could have been damaged due to the forcible removal of ornate gold caps, that are similar to early Kassite seals (Thorn and Collon, 2013: 125).



Picture and Drawing No: 4

Catalog No: 5	Picture and Drawing No: 5		Museum Inventory Number: 3/2/98
Type: Cylinder seal	Material: Black hematite stone	Period: Middle Assyrian	Arrival to the Museum: Purchasing
Dimensions: length: 2,8 cm, diameter: 1,3 cm			
Analogues: Ward, 1909: 34, 197, 200; Niederreiter, 2020: 63, 66; Avcı, 2013: 214, 216; Sezen, 2015: 254; Von der Osten, 1934: 248; Porada, 2014: 329.			
Definition and Explanation: Positioned below the winged sun disc is a depiction of the sun, and beneath it a stylized tree. Flanking the stylized tree are two goats with lion's claws, and a tail with snake head and wings. The presence of winged animals in scenes has been documented since around 2200-2100 BC (the Third Dynasty of Ur period) (Avcı, 2013: 72). The stylized tree symbol is the most widespread ornamentation in the art of Sami in Mesopotamia. During the Neo-Assyrian period, it became an imperial symbol and its extensive use led to its dissemination throughout the entire Near East until the end of the first millennium, according to some researchers (Parpola, 1993: 167; Avcı, 2013: 4, 72). The sun disk and the sun (often accompanied by a crescent) are frequently depicted in Late Assyrian artworks.			
 			
Picture and Drawing No: 5			

Catalog No: 6	Picture and Drawing No: 6		Museum Inventory Number: 8/2/97
Type: Cylinder seal	Material: Quartz Stone	Period: Neo-Assyrian	Arrival to the Museum: Confiscation

Dimensions: length: 2 cm, diameter: 1,1 cm

Analogues: Ward, 1909: 353; Teissier, 1984: 99; Tosun, 1956: 67.

Definition and Explanation: In the single scene engraved on the cylinder seal, there is a winged, horned, bird-headed creature along with other creatures known as griffins, which have horns, bird heads, and human bodies. They are holding a fruit resembling a pineapple/date fruit in their hands. The winged, horned, bird-headed creature in the background extends its left hand toward the altar. Bird-headed human figures were also depicted on the seals of the Alişar, Acemhöyük, and Karahöyük civilizations. In Alişar, the winged bird-headed creatures held an antelope in one hand and a curved weapon in the other (Özkan, 2022: 77). In a seal impression found in Alişar, a bird-headed human was depicted with pine trees on either side. In the seal impression from Acemhöyük, mixed creatures with bird-like wings for arms and bird-like feet for legs were shown. The demons depicted were holding a date palm tree with a crescent symbol on it (Özkan, 2022: 77). Complex religious ceremonies in Anatolia were depicted on seals, metal ritons, relief vases, rock monuments, and from the 14th century BCE onwards, on orthostats. In seals dating back to the late 18th century BCE, libations were performed by griffin-headed demons or priests wearing masks (Collon, & Sevinç, 2004: 86-87). These depictions are precursors of the griffin demons seen in Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian art. In the seal from Catalog 5, which is believed to be from the Neo-Assyrian period, the central griffin-headed demon is depicted holding the fruit of a pineapple/date tree. On the far right, just below a wild goat, there are three concentric circle-shaped symbols. These symbols were found on seal impressions, cylinder seals, altars, and braziers discovered in the excavations of Konya Karahöyük (Alp, 1994: 102-103). Alp suggested that concentric circles could be associated with the cult of the sun (Alp, 1994: 102). The triple griffin figures are facing towards the right. There is an altar between the central griffin and the one in the back, while the griffin on the far right extends its hand offering the fruit. Two of the griffins have wings, while the central one is wingless. The wingless griffin holds the pineapple/date-like fruit with both hands. In the upper frieze, a crouching horned antelope is placed as a filling motif. Just below the antelope figure, there are three nested circles (guilloche), and beneath the circles, a goose is depicted with its wings spread open. In Assyrian seals, filling motifs are typically represented with rosettes (Von der Osten, 1934: 45; Tosun, 1956: Cat. 9).



1 cm



1 cm

Picture and Drawing No: 6

2. Antithetical Scenes: Hybrid Creatures and Animals

Catalog No: 7	Picture and Drawing No: 7		Museum Inventory Number: 16/1/08
Type: Cylinder seal	Material: Black Steatite Stone	Period: Neo-Assyrian (8 th century BC)	Arrival to the Museum: From Ergani Çakırtaş village.

Dimensions: length: 1,6 cm, diameter: 1 cm

Analogues: Teissier, 1984: 17-18; Nys, 2018: Cat. 32.




Definition and Explanation: The criterion in bird/gryphon-man depictions revolves around whether they possess wings or not. The portrayal of griffins has had a historical presence in Anatolia since the Age of Assyrian Trade Colonies. An example of such depictions was found on a seal discovered during the Konya-Karahöyük excavations, wherein a winged birdman was depicted kneeling on one leg along with a seated god (Erkanal, 1993: 33, Lev. 58). In Catalog 7, in the central scene, there are two birdmen facing each other, with a goat-headed figure behind the birdman on the left and behind the birdman on the right, there is a scorpion and a human figure. The human figure raises its right hand upward in an adoration position. Between the horned, goat-headed figure and the birdman on the left, there is a vessel believed to contain elixir. There are two symbols resembling Hittite hieroglyphic signs between the birdmen (Erkanal, 1993: 143). Above the scorpion, there is an eight-pointed star symbol. The symbol between the birdmen could be a variation of the Hittite hieroglyphic sign (Erkanal, 1993: 143).





1 cm

Picture and Drawing No: 7

3. Hunting and Fighting Scenes

Catalog No: 8	Picture and Drawing No:8		Museum Inventory Number: 19/26/06
Type: Cylinder Seals	Material: Black Hematite Stone	Period: Neo-Assyria	Arrival to the Museum: Purchasing
Dimensions: length: 2,7 cm, diameter: 1,2 cm			
Analogues: Nys, 2018: Cat. 32; Niederreiter, 2020: 32.			
<p>Definition and Explanation: This repeating scene depicts a winged dragon (bull) and the seal's owner. Between the winged dragon/bull and the seal's owner, there is the symbol of Ishtar, represented by an eight-pointed star. Notably, the seal's owner is depicted without a beard. Usually, a winged horned dragon (bull) on a seal symbolizes Marduk. But, the bull (dragon) portrayed here as a griffin represents Tiamat. On the right, presumably the owner of the seal, is in a kneeling position with one leg inside a garment, arms open in the air, holding an object, possibly in a position that suggests creation. The seal's owner may have wanted to convey the idea of being created by Marduk, just as Marduk created Samsu-iluna. For in the mythological narrative, the story is conveyed as follows: <i>"When you strike the foreign lands that are hostile to you like a violent storm, let your head be held high, O king; let your head be held high, O Samsu-iluna! In Babylon, the city of divine powers of Suen, let your intellect shine like the sun! May the god Marduk who created you raise your head among lords and princes!"</i> (Falkenstein, 1949: 218).</p>			
  			
Picture and Drawing No: 8			

Catalog No: 9	Picture and Drawing No: 9		Museum Inventory Number: 20/6/10
Type: Cylinder Seals	Material: Sintered Quartz Stone	Period: Neo-Assyrian (883-612 BC)	Arrival to the Museum: Purchasing
Dimensions: length: 2,6 cm, diameter: 1 cm			
Analogues: Von der Osten, 1934: 248; Ward, 1909: 197, 200; Avcı, 2013: 214, 216; Nys, 2018: Cat. 32, 82, 83; Niederreiter, 2020: 63, 66; Sezen, 2015: 254; Ensert, 2017: 104; Genç, 2017: 128, Pic. 2b; Munn-Rankin, 1959: Plate VII-26.			
Definition and Explanation: Sintered ³ quartz cylinder seals typically depict a standing god (Marduk), a two-legged animal, or a hybrid creature hunting. The scene is then bordered with double lines across the top and bottom. The targets aimed at with arrows are in the linear style of Assur and generally consist of a bull, wild goat, or wild sheep (sometimes a winged human-bird) (Niederreiter, 2020: 33). The god depicted is likely Marduk with a two-winged scorpion-man (Munn-Rankin, 1959: 27). This rendering is a well-known subject and can be seen in several known examples from the Assyrian cities of Assur and Kalhu, as well as from border areas of Iran, such as the Zagros cemetery near Sanandaj (Niederreiter, 2020: 33). The scene consists of a single frieze. The bodies are roughly carved in a flat manner, and the details are roughly rendered with a grooved-mouthed stylus, with some details shown in relief. (Ensert, 2017: 101). In some seal examples, a bearded sphinx with raised wings is depicted, along with a bearded, long-tuniced archer (deity) aiming at it with a bow and arrow. In front of the sphinx, there is a motif of the Tree of Life. A hybrid creature can also be depicted with a human bearded head, bird tail, and feline claws, and there is a deity shooting an arrow towards it. The hybrid creature likely represents one of the protective entities from Assur (Orman, Ortiz, & Wolff, 2013: 14). In this depiction, the hybrid creature is walking to the right and the god is aiming an arrow at the creature's back.. In front of the hybrid creature is the tree of life, and in front of the god are two wing-like objects (Yücel, & Parlütü, 2020: 8). The subject matter of this seal is associated with a group of locally found Assur or Assurized seals, prevalent in the western regions of the Assyrian Empire, depicting only animals or hybrid creatures (Reich., & Brandl, 1985: 47, Cat. 6:3).			
			
			
Picture and Drawing No: 9			

- 3 Sintering or fritting is the process of compressing and forming a solid mass of material by pressure or heat without melting it to its liquefaction point. Sintering occurs as part of a manufacturing process used with metals, ceramics, plastics, and other materials.

Catalog No: 11	Picture and Drawing No: 11		Museum Inventory Number: 30/3/13
Type: Cylinder Seals	Material: Calcite	Period: Neo-Assyrian (9 th century BC)	Arrival to the Museum: Confiscation

Dimensions: length: 2 cm, diameter: 1,15 cm

Analogues: Ward, 1909: 372.

Definition and Explanation: The scene is bordered by a raised line across the top and bottom. Between the two borders that frame the scene, there is a hunting scene with three figures. It belongs to Assur's linear/style. The three figures likely represent the god Ninurta. In each depiction of Ninurta, he is in a standing position facing the viewer with a sword in his right hand and a trident in his left. He is wearing a long, belted robe with a band diagonally placed across his chest, and the lower part of the robe is adorned with a fringed skirt. He has a belt around his waist and a sheath for a dagger attached to it. Flanking each Ninurta in the upper area are an eight-sided star and a crescent. Below the eight-sided star and crescent are a pair of bulls facing each other. One of the bulls is kneeling and the other is raising its two front legs. (Niederreiter, 2020: 30) The earliest known example of a similar scene on a cylinder seal can be traced back to the reign of Kassite King Kurigalzu II (1332-1308 BCE). In this earlier depiction, Ninurta is holding a trident with three arrows and the two bulls are in a combat position in front of him.




3 cm



1 cm

Picture and Drawing No: 11

4. Presentation, Worship, Offering Scenes

Catalog No: 12	Picture and Drawing No: 12		Museum Inventory Number: 1/5/01
Type: Cylinder Seals	Material: Black Hematite Stone	Period: Old Babylonian (1820-1730 BCE)	Arrival to the Museum: Purchasing
Dimensions: length: 3,6 cm, diameter: 2,3 cm			
Analogues: Ward, 1909: 372; Özkan, 1993: 503, pl 90.			
<p>Definition and Explanation: It consists of a quadruple figure scene depicting an offering to the goddess. This theme emerged during the Third Dynasty of Ur and continued during the Babylonian period. In the scene, the goddess is seated on a decorated throne on the right, while on the left, a protective deity presents an offering. The leftmost part of the scene features cuneiform inscriptions and symbols (Von der Osten, 1934: Cat. 174). In our example seal, the scene depicts a goddess facing left, seated on a lavishly decorated low stool, wearing a round headdress, a fringed mantle, and bracelets, while holding a small cup. Facing the goddess is a protective deity wearing a horned headdress, and right behind the deity is a creature resembling a horned and winged goat, which is being presented to the goddess as an offering. Behind the creature, there is another deity wearing a round headdress and a fringed mantle, also presenting themselves to the goddess. In the background, three figures are walking towards the deity, with a filler motif positioned between the creature and the bearded deity in front of it. A similar figure is also present between the goddess and the protective deity. In front of the seated goddess, there is a disk with a crescent-shaped star inscription. At the end of the scene, there is a panel with a two-line inscription. The god Amurru, representing the Amorite people (Akkadian Amurru), is represented in cylinder seals as early as the 2nd millennium BCE. It is likely that the god Amurru, as a personification of the semi-nomadic Amorite tribes he shared his name with, was created by the urban elites of southern Mesopotamia. The symbols associated with this deity - horned animals, a crooked staff, and in some cases, a distinctive headdress or stylized mountain - all emphasized his foreignness. In this cylinder seal, Amurru is depicted in a subordinate position, standing before a seated (and traditionally attired) god. Such cylinder seals in the ancient Near East served as both a form of talisman and a mark of ownership or identity. The representation of Amurru on this seal may have appealed to its owner as a symbol of their Amorite identity in Mesopotamia or, more likely, as a protective device, as the god is associated with exorcism and healing. The worship and presentation scene are similar to those found on seals of ancient Assyrian kings (such as Erishum and AN-LUGAL..., the city ruler of the god Assur, son of Ikunum). In these ancient Assyrian seals, a seated god holding a cup is being worshipped by a male figure (the king) brought by the goddess Lama (Özkan, 1993: 502).</p>			
			
Picture and Drawing No: 12			

Catalog No: 13	Picture and Drawing No: 13	Museum Inventory Number: 26/48/86	
Type: Cylinder Seals	Material: Diorite Stone	Period: Old Babylonian (1820-1730 BCE)	Arrival to the Museum: Museum of Anatolian Civilizations.

Dimensions: length: 1,8 cm, diameter: 1 cm

Analogues: Nys, 2018: Cat. 32; Von Bakel, 2019: 7.

Definition and Explanation: A triple deity and goddess group depicted in a single frieze. The deity in the center has their left hand placed towards their chest. The adorned goddess on the right has her right hand raised upwards and her left hand positioned at the waist. The naked goddess on the left is depicted frontally, holding her breasts with both hands.



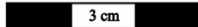
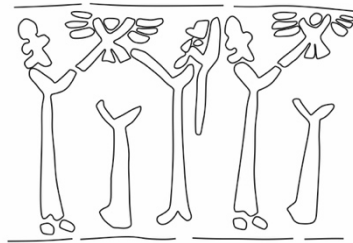
3 cm



1 cm

Picture and Drawing No: 13

Catalog No: 14	Picture and Drawing No: 14		Museum Inventory Number: 5/1/84
Type: Cylinder Seals	Material: Steatite	Period: Neo-Assyrian	Arrival to the Museum: Purchasing
Dimensions: length: 3,4 cm, diameter: 1 cm			
Analogues: Nys, 2018: Cat. 32.			
Definition and Explanation: The seal consists of a single scene, featuring two opposing altars in an antithetical form, with a smaller altar in the center. On top of the altars, there are depictions of winged sun disks within the altars.			



Picture and Drawing No: 14

Conclusions

The seals examined in the current study indicate the existence of a strong network of trade or powerful colonies established by dominant states of the period in Diyarbakır. Almost all of these cylinder seals were acquired through illegal excavations, purchases, and seizures, and subsequently added to museums. Scientific excavations would contribute to completing numerous missing pieces related to Mesopotamian and Anatolian civilizations, including many seals like these.

Moreover, these cylinder seals, reflecting the glyptic elements, depict Assur and Assurized objects. They are likely part of Assur palace items used and presented by administrative or military officials associated with Assur, along with other findings such as armor scales, horse

trappings, and components of Assur-style architecture. However, the acquisition of these cylinder seals through illicit excavations and purchases has hindered obtaining information about other components of Assur. These particular cylinder seals, potentially belonging to the period following the Assyrian campaign led by Tiglath-Pileser III in 734/733 BCE, demonstrate the influence of Neo-Assyria.

These seals deviated from the usual Assur linear style and demonstrate a completely different application method, indicating the utilization of techniques from various cultures in the Neo-Assyrian period (8th century BCE) throughout the Near East. From this perspective, it seems that Assur embraced the cultures of the territories it conquered, even benefiting from them, and further developing its own. For instance, the use of minimal perforations with a tool resembling a sickle on quartz, a hard stone, as seen in Catalog 9 and Catalog 10, is an unusual practice. All these factors contributed to the creation of the Assur seal style. Additionally, the transformation of a curved or feathery scorpion tail into a hybrid dragon tail demonstrates the influence of local productions and how seals were influenced by Assur imperial artworks.

When evaluating the mythological scenes, the origin of the winged horse and the possible Tree of Life scene depicted in Catalog 5 can be traced back to the 3rd millennium BCE. This mythological narrative continued to be influential until the Neo-Assyrian period, eventually becoming a symbol of the empire. As a result of its political impact, this motif successfully spread throughout the entire Near East. The main elements of the naked bull-man depicted in Catalog 2 and Catalog 3 can be traced back to the Akkadian period. The mythological narrative portrayed in Catalog 3, with its foundation in the Epic of Gilgamesh in Sumerian culture (2800-2500 BCE), demonstrates the influence of this mythology on later cultures. The seal depicted in Catalog 4, featuring a horned deer and a human figure with raised hands above it, reflects the style of the Popular Mitanni culture (1700-1200 BCE). Seals portraying compositions of deer, the Tree of Life, and figures are associated with the Mitanni culture dating back to the mid-2nd millennium BCE. In the scene depicted in Catalog 6, there are depictions of winged, horned, bird-headed creatures and horned, bird-headed, human-bodied griffins. This similar popular scene composition was used from Anatolia to Mesopotamia, starting from the Middle Assyrian period.

Catalog 7 depicts a scene of hybrid creatures and animals in an antithetical composition, featuring two standing birdmen facing each other. In this scene, it is noteworthy that there is a symbol resembling Hittite hieroglyph between the goat-headed figure standing behind the birdman figure on the left and between the two birdmen. It is possible to trace the origin of this symbol and the narrative depicted on the seal back to the period of the Assyrian Trade Colonies in Anatolia.

One of the most exquisite examples of hunting scenes depicted on seals can be found in Catalog 8, where Marduk's winged dragon is portrayed, and the beardless figure likely represents the owner of the seal. This depiction offers significant insights into the concept of private property and its political, social, and religious implications. Catalog 9 showcases an archer figure, a bipedal hybrid creature, and a scene featuring the Tree of Life, which was widely appreciated across the geography from Mesopotamia to the Zagros Mountains in Iran. Another seal, depicted in Catalog 10, featuring an archer scene, has spread to another geographical region, the Levant, and Southeast Anatolia. The significance of this seal lies in the archer figure shooting the snake, which corresponds to the most well-known mythological narrative of Mesopotamia, stretching from Israelite centers to Diyarbakır. In Catalog 10, we observe the depiction of a dragon, a human archer, and the Tree of Life, indicating their popularity during the Neo-Assyrian period. In Catalog 11, we encounter a similar mythological depiction where Ninurta is confronted by a bull, a different animal from the snake found in Mesopotamia's tradition.

The presentation, worship, and offering scenes depicted on seals, such as in Catalog 12, extend in subject matter until the end of the 3rd millennium BCE. This mythological scene continued to be depicted on seals in the 2nd millennium BCE and persisted into the 1st millennium BCE. In Catalog 13, two divine figures are shown making an offering before a goddess. Catalog 14 features an altar and a winged solar disc within the altar. These scenes demonstrate the uninterrupted application of symbols known from Mesopotamian culture, particularly during the 3rd millennium BCE, into the inner periods of the 1st millennium BCE.

Suggestions

Most of the seals currently housed in the Diyarbakır Museum warehouse were obtained through purchases and confiscations. The procurement of these seals by the Diyarbakır Archaeology Museum primarily occurred as a result of illicit excavations in the mounds located within and surrounding the region of Diyarbakır. Consequently, it is necessary to initiate systematic mound excavations in Diyarbakır, a region of great significance in terms of historical settlements in Mesopotamia. Such endeavors will not only unveil previously undisclosed facets of artifact smuggling but also elucidate the intricate relationship between Mesopotamia and Anatolia.

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