

## NEW CYLINDER SEALS FROM TELL ASMAR (THE ANCIENT CITY OF ESHNUNNA) FROM THE IRAQI EXCAVATIONS 2001–2002

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This article presents a study of seventeen cylinder seals discovered in the city of the Eshnunna (Tell Asmar), which was one of the most important cities during the Old Babylonian period in Mesopotamia; these pieces are part of a large group of finds, statues, pottery, metal pieces, cuneiform texts, as well as group of cylinder seals, all of which were found in the private houses in the southern part of the city, by the Iraqi excavations at the site, more than twenty years ago. They showed the social status of these houses' residents, their loyalties and their religious beliefs. Thus the discoveries shed light on the importance of this city and the necessity of continuing excavation work there.

### *Introduction*

Tell Asmar is one of the most critical sites in the Diyala region, 80 km northeast of Baghdad and 33 km southeast of Baqubah, east of the Diyala River. It represents the ruins of the ancient city of Eshnunna, the capital of the Kingdom of Eshnunna (fig. 1). The first excavations at the Tell Asmar site were by the American excavations of the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago in the 1930s.

After a hiatus of six and a half decades, excavations resumed in the city of Eshnunna (Tell Asmar), conducted for two seasons by an Iraqi archaeological expedition.<sup>1</sup> The first season included work for the last three months of the year (2001) from 1/10/2001 until 31/12/2001. A location for excavation was chosen at a high point of more than four meters above the ground level of the site in the southern part of the city (fig. 2 and 3). Excavation resumed in the second season (from 1/4/2002 to 25/12/2002). As the excavation expedition confirmed that they were working in a large neighbourhood that included a group of private houses (Fig 4), called the southern private houses (Figs. 5, 6, 7 the excavation levels), to distinguish them from the private houses discovered by the American excavations in the thirties of the last century.

The Iraqi excavations in the city of Eshnunna 2001-2002 found a number of cylinder seals of different sizes and stone-types, all dating back to the Old Babylonian Period. The topics carved on them are religious and daily-life scenes. There are nineteen seals but two of them are very damaged, so the other seventeen seals were chosen for this research as part of my Master's thesis at the University of Baghdad in 2020, entitled *Private houses in Eshnunna city (Tell Asmar) in the light of Iraqi excavations of the season 2001–2002*. Table 1 includes their museum numbers, finds, measurements, colours, type of manufacturing material, and condition.

All of these seal-finds belong to private houses. Six seals were found in room 1 of L40c. Possibly this has something to do with the function of the house or the jobs of its occupants. It could have been a workshop for seals or these seals belonged to the individual residents of the house as markers of ownership. Many other clay, sculptural and ceramic objects were found in the same room which will hopefully form the subject of a further piece of research.

### *1. Cylinder Seal number IM 186710 (Fig. 8)*

The cylinder seal is perforated with a prominent edge, with a frame surrounding the scene of the seal from above and below, made of marble. The seal depicts the salutation or presentation scene (see Tsouparopoulou 2015: 28–34). That scene of compliance to the gods appeared for the first time on seals since the Early Dynastic and was popular in the Akkadian period and the Ur III period (Khalaf 2010: 88). On the right hand side there is a figure of a king sitting on his throne. The king

<sup>1</sup> The excavation team consisted of: Dr. Salah Rumaid, Faisal Muhammad, Hassan Rashid, Qasim Rashid, and Majed Rasheed Majed.

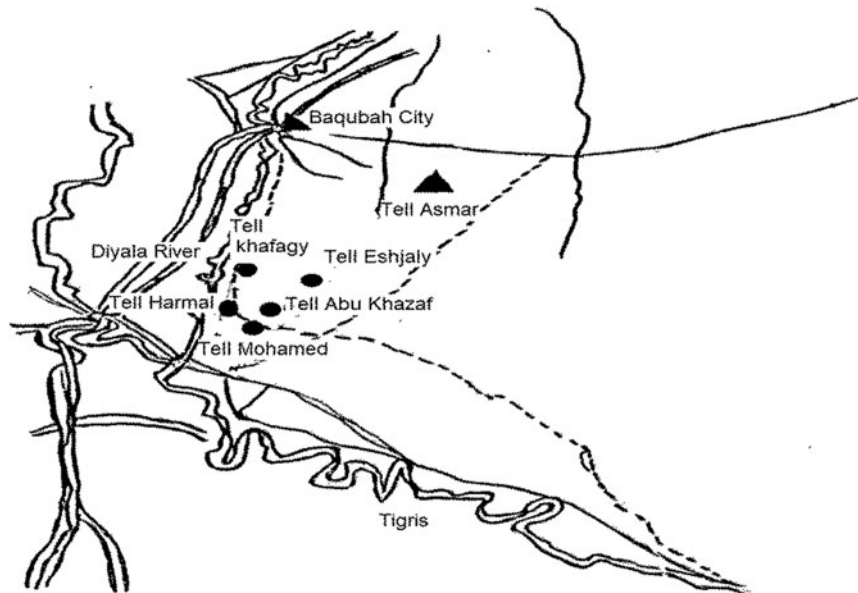


Fig. 1. Tell Asmar and the cities of the Eshnunna kingdom

turns to the left and extends his right hand forward at the level of the mouth, holding a cup in his hand. By contrast, his left hand is placed in the middle of his upper body. He wears a head cover. Also he has a long beard that reaches the level of the chest. On this seal, the king is wearing a flounced garment, which is typically associated with gods, and his throne is also of the type usually associated with gods. The end of his garment seems unfinished. The king also wears the royal headdress (a hat) and holds in his outstretched hand a vessel or cup. The man standing in front of the king stands sideways to the right, his right hand raised upwards at the level of the mouth, and his left hand stretched forward.

He wears a cap on his head and a uniform decorated with vertical folds that reach the feet. A crescent with a radiant four-pointed star in its middle is depicted in an upper register in the

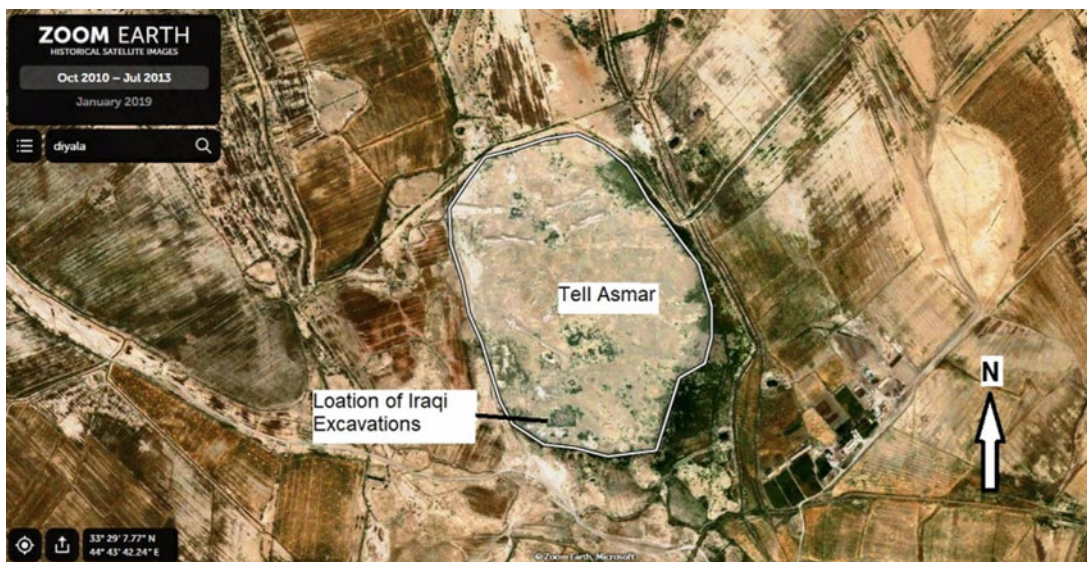


Fig. 2. The location of the Iraqi excavation in Tell Asmar

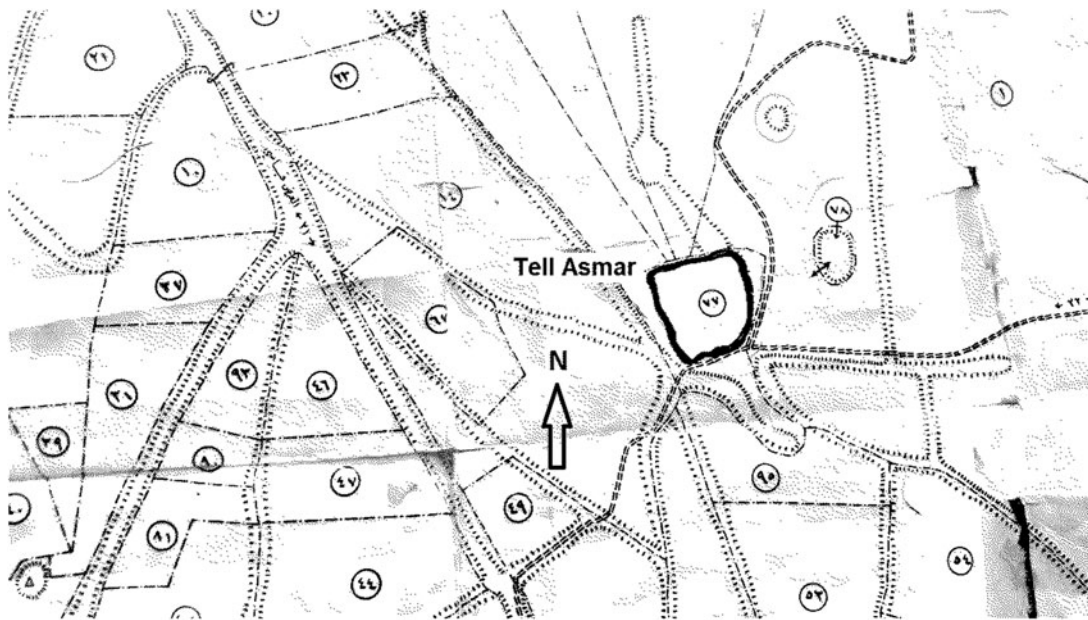


Fig. 3. Tell Asmar and its surrounding area in the Cadastral map



Fig. 4. A photograph showing the area of excavation

space between the king and the man standing before him. The figure combines several symbols, such as a disc and wavy bands, which refer to the sun, the symbol of the god Shamash. While the star is the symbol of the goddess Inanna/Ishtar, and the crescent is the symbol of the god Nanna/Sin, and this perhaps indicates the power of the god Shamash and his control over the universe as the son of the god Sin and the brother of the goddess Ishtar. This symbol has appeared on artistic scenes since the Early Dynastic I (Al-Shaker 2002: 75).



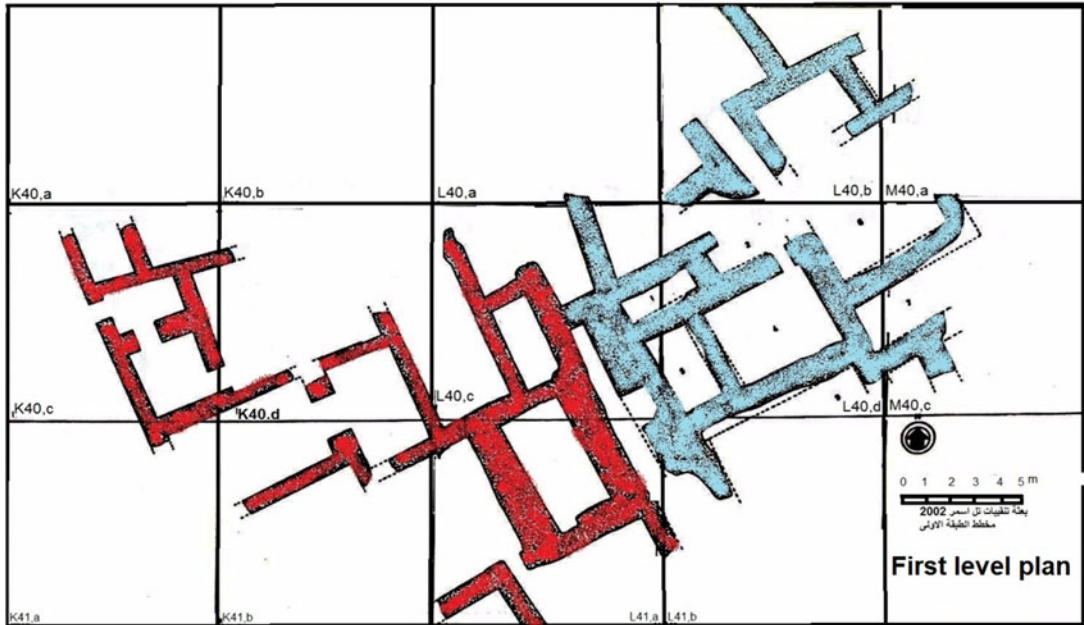


Fig. 5. First-level plan of the Iraqi excavations



Fig. 6. Second-level plan of The Iraqi excavations (The private houses)

The scene is realistic; people are depicted in a side view of the head and lower limbs, while the body is full-frontal. Behind the king, there are three lines of cuneiform writing:

- |                                     |                       |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. <i>la-šu-qa-at</i>               | Lashuqat              |
| 2. <i>DUMU NE-iš-pi-el</i>          | Son of Nishbil        |
| 3. <i>ra-bi</i> <sup>d</sup> MAR.TU | Chief of the Amorites |



Third level plan

Fig. 7. Third-level plan of The Iraqi excavations (The private houses)

A similar cylinder seal the from the Old Babylonian period was found in the Diyala region (Collon 1986: 78, fig. 77). The cylinder seals discovered in Tell Asmar included seals carved with written texts in the cuneiform script, which occupied part of the cylinder seal scene, while the rest of the surface of the seal was left to create the desired scene. The cuneiform writing was inscribed vertically from the top of the seal to the bottom, and the inscription was reversed to enable it to be read correctly when stamped on clay.






The emergence of writing on cylinder seals began in the second period of the Early Dynastic. The writing on the seal sometimes indicates the profession or title of the owner of the seal, and the seals of state officials contained supplication formulas demonstrating loyalty to the King. It became one of the characteristics of the seals of the Old Babylonian Period that there are two or more lines of cuneiform writing, mentioning the name of the owner, and sometimes the name of his father and his work, and the protective deity, and sometimes the name of the ruler or king (Ravn 1960: 72, no. 77, 80).






## 2. Cylinder Seal number IM 186712 (FIG. 9)

A perforated cylinder seal made of marble includes a scene of obedience to the king. On the right side, a king appears seated on a throne, with a long beard that reaches chest level, his right hand raised up at the level of the mouth holding a cup. While his left hand is placed on his waist, he wears a cap on his head, the king is depicted wearing a flounced garment which was usually associated with deities. He is also seated on the royal throne, which is a stool. The king's throne is covered with what looks like sheepskin. A man stands in front of the king, his hands clasped mid-way down his body, wearing a circular cap and a robe with a long opening in the middle decorated with vertical lines.

A crescent moon is placed in an upper register in the space between the deity and the person. This is the symbol of the god Sin (Van Buren 1945: 60; Black/Green 1992: 55). Behind the king, there are five fields of cuneiform writing, which are:

TABLE 1: Overview of the seals from the 2001–2002 Iraqi excavations at Tell Asmar





<i>Condition</i>	<i>Measurements</i>			<i>Color</i>	<i>material</i>	<i>Find locations</i>	<i>Season</i>	<i>Museum No</i>	<i>Cylinder Seals</i>	<i>No.</i>
	<i>hole diameter</i>	<i>Diameter</i>	<i>length/height</i>							
Good	/	2 Cm	4 Cm	brown reddish	Marble stone	L40c Room 1	second	IM: 186710		1.
Good	/	1.5 Cm	2.5 Cm	brown	Marble stone	L40c Room 1	second	IM: 186712		2.
Good	/	1.7 Cm	2.9 Cm	brown reddish	Marble stone	L40c Room 1	second	IM: 186711		3.
Good	/	1.9 Cm	2.7 Cm	Grey	Marble stone	K41b Room 61	second	IM: 189372		4.
Good	Incom-plete hole	1 Cm	2.3 Cm	brown	Marble stone	M41d	second	IM: 198329		5.

Incomplete	without a hole	1.3 Cm	2.6 Cm	brown	limestone	L40c Room 1	First season	IM: 186715		6.
Good	/	1.8 Cm	1.1 Cm	White brown	Marble	K41d Room 98	second	IM: 196251		7.
Good	5 Cm	1.9 Cm	1.1 Cm	Grey	Marble	M40b	second	IM: 192501		8.
Good	/	0.8 Cm	1.7 Cm	brown	Marble	K41 Street 101	second	IM: 192665		9.
Good	/	1.6 Cm	3 Cm	Black	Hematite	M40d Room 51	second	IM: 196286		10.




NEW CYLINDER SEALS FROM TELL ASMAR

*Continued*

TABLE 1: (Continued)

Condition	Measurements			Color	material	Find locations	Season	Museum No	Cylinder Seals	No.
	hole diameter	Diameter	length/height							
Part of the seal is missing	0.4 Cm	1.3 Cm	2.3 Cm	brown	limestone	L41a Room 38	First season	IM: 186665		11.
Good	/	1 Cm	2.5 Cm	brown	Marble	L41c Room 111	second	IM: 192611		12.
Good	/	1.5 Cm	2.5 Cm	Black	diorite	M40d Room 51	second	IM: 196287		13.
Part of the seal is missing	/	1.3 Cm	2.5 Cm	brown	limestone	L40c Room1	second	IM: 186713		14.



Good	without a hole	1.2 Cm	2.5 Cm	brown	limestone	L40c Room 1	second	IM: 186714		15.
Good	without a hole	1 Cm	1.8 Cm	brown	Marble	M40b Room 105	second	IM: 196207		16.
Good	/	0.8 Cm	1.7 Cm	Black	diorite	L7	second	IM: 196364		17.

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Fig. 8. IM 186710



Fig. 9. IM 186712

- |   |                           |
|---|---------------------------|
| 1. <i>a-zu-zum</i>                              | Azuzum                    |
| 2. ENS <sub>2</sub>                             | Governor                  |
| 3. <i>aš<sub>2</sub>-nun-na<sup>ki</sup></i>    | of the (city of) Eshnunna |
| 4. <i>a-at-ta-i<sub>3</sub>-li<sub>2</sub></i>  | Atta-ilī                  |
| 5. DUB.SAR IR <sub>3</sub> -ZU/-su <sub>2</sub> | Scribe, your/his slave    |

A seal-impresion of a seal very similar to or the same as this one was found with written text in the city of Eshnunna during the American excavations in the 1930s: As 30:T.559 (Frayne 1990: 507, no. 2001). Possibly this is the seal which made that impresion. The little information available on the ruler Azuzum is summarized by de Graef (2022: 419): one year-name (Saporetti 2013: 127 19A), a standard royal impresion found on bricks (Frayne 1990: 505) and seals of two of his servants (Reichel 2001; 2008; 2018).

### 3. Cylinder Seal number IM 186711 (Fig. 10)

A perforated Cylinder seal, similar to the previous seal in the type of stone from which the seal is made, the content, the general shape, and the writing itself, except that the difference lies in the appearance of the king in this seal, clean-shaven and sitting on a throne placed on a platform. The impresion is identical. The standing person appears in the same form and clothes as the person standing in front of the king in Fig. 9, the same applies to the crescent at the top of the space between the king and the person standing before him.

These two seals indicate that their owner is probably one person, especially since they were found in one room within the second layer of the Old Babylonian period. With two seals, Atta-ilī must have been an important individual. The artist showed the seated king or ruler in two forms, the one clean-shaven, and the other with a long beard, perhaps to indicate realism by representing figures on the seals that reflect the actual appearance of the king's character.



Fig. 10. IM 186711

#### 4. Cylinder Seal number IM 189372 (Fig. 11)

A perforated Cylinder seal made of marble contains a scene of obedience to the king, as it shows on the right side a king wearing a flounced garment and seated on the royal throne; his right hand is slightly bent and extended forward, and he is holding a cup. His left hand is placed on the middle of the body, he wears a circular headdress with a thick edge that covers the forehead. He has a long beard that reaches chest level, the right shoulder is not covered, and the king wears a long dress that reaches the feet consisting of several rows of horizontal folds. Finally, he sits on a throne without a backrest covered with a sheepskin composed of three layers.

The throne is placed on a platform representing the throne-base, and a man standing in front of the king wears a helmet-like headdress and has a long beard that reaches chest level. His hands are intertwined and joined below the chest. He wears a long robe that reaches the ankles of the feet, open from the front. His right hand is not covered.

Behind him stands an intercessor goddess who raises her hands in front of the mouth, palms open for supplication, and wears a crown with horns. She wears a long dress with horizontal folds. Behind the goddess, on the left side of the scene, a man is depicted with bowed legs (bow-legged dwarf), standing on a bench, clasping his hands below his chest. His legs are bowed, his feet are open, and he is naked. This is a typical Old Babylonian filling motif, always depicted naked and wearing a distinctive cap, as in this seal. That symbol is known as the dancing man or the dwarf man, and it is not known specifically what he represents or symbolizes and what is his purpose, but according to Sumerian mythology, the dwarf man is the guardian of the gates of the underworld (Frankfort 1939: 173).

At the top of the space between the king and the man standing in front of him, a crescent moon, in the middle of which is a radiant four-pointed star, is depicted. Also between the two figures, but slightly lower and to the left, we also have the ball-and-staff symbol. It is a common religious symbol, which often appears in the empty spaces on the seals in the religious scenes on the seals of the Old Babylonian period (Dilshad Aziz 2006: 178). There are two columns of cuneiform writing behind the seated king.



Fig. 11. IM 189372



Fig. 12. IM 198329.

1. <sup>d</sup>nin-a-zu                      God Ninazu
2. <sup>d</sup>nin-giš-zi-da              God Ningišzida

Ninazu is a god of medicine, and his centre of worship was in the city of Eshnunna since the third millennium BC (Stevens 2013). The god Tishpak's attributes may have been modelled on his. His temple in the city of Eshnunna was known as the "pure temple", *é-sikil-la* (George 1993: 141), and its remains have not yet been discovered. Ninazu is furthermore the father of the god Ningišzida (Black/Green 1992: 137). Ningišzida was one of the deities of the Lagash dynasty. He is one of the deities of the underworld, and he represents the role of messenger of the gods in that world. The god was known in religious texts for his great magical powers as a god of medicine and healing (Al-Ahmad 1974: 90; also: Van Buren 1934: 81; Stone 2016). Furthermore, this god is considered to be a son of God Nergal (Hanoun 1986: 211).

##### 5. Cylinder Seal number IM 198329 (Fig. 12)

A perforated cylinder seal made of marble, with a scene of a man's obedience to the king carved on its surface. The scene consists of two men, the first sitting on a chair to the right of the scene, and the second standing in front of the seated king. The seated person is seen from a side view, and the king's throne is simple, with his head uncovered and bent back. His facial features are blurred. His right hand is stretched forward, the palm of his hand is open, and his left hand is turned over.

The man standing in front of him had his head and feet positioned sideways and his torso positioned forward. He is bareheaded, his left hand is obscured due to the seal being damaged in this part, and his right hand is bent and stretched forward with an open palm. Also, an open-topped crescent is found at the top of the space between the seated king and the person standing before him.

The seal is dated to the Old Babylonian Period by comparison with other seals found in different locations: Tell Harmal (Al-Gailani-Werr 1988: 18, fig. 80) and Tell Asmar (ibid. fig. 82, Frankfort 1955 pl. 66, fig. 715, pl. 87, fig. 926).

##### 6. Cylinder Seal number IM: 186715 (Fig. 13)

Unperforated cylinder seal, made of limestone. The surface of the seal is probably carved with a scene of obedience to the king. A king appears seated on a small rectangular royal throne.

Its seat is covered with what looks like a sheepskin, consisting of three layers. First, the scene shows a seated king, on the right side of the scene, placing his left hand on his waist and extending his right hand in front of him at shoulder level, holding a cup with it. The king wears a cap.

The face is not clear, and he has a long beard that reaches chest level, arranged in several vertical tufts, and he wears a long dress that reaches the feet with horizontal folds. The remaining part of the has been polished, and possibly contained fields of writing that were erased in preparation for carving another scene on them or for adding another text of writing instead of an old text.





Fig. 13. IM 186715

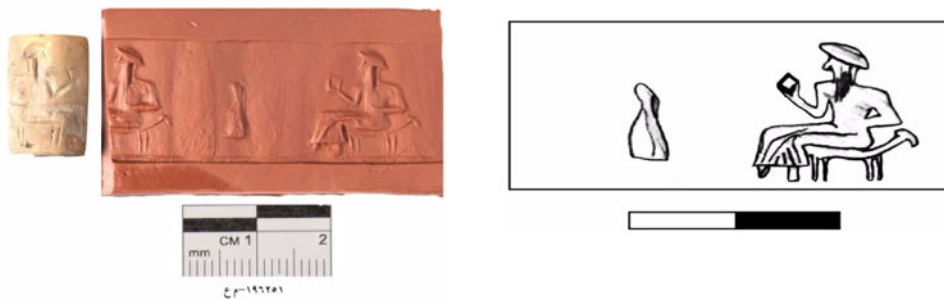


Fig. 14. IM 196251

#### 7. Cylinder Seal number IM 196251 (Fig. 14)

Incomplete cylinder seal, made of marble. The surface of the seal most likely contained a scene of obedience in front of the king. The scene consists of a bearded king sitting on his throne on the right side, bending his left hand at his waist and extending his right hand at chest level, with his palm open as a greeting. The king wears a turban, his face is clear, the eyes are wide, and the nose is prominent. He has a long beard that reaches chest level, and he wears a long dress that reaches the feet, devoid of details.

The king's throne has four legs and a short backrest tilted slightly backward. In front of the king appears the figure of an incomplete human being, showing the torso without the feet and the head. The artist may have started work here on the person's body as the main part of the composition. As for the shape of the limbs and the decoration of the head, the artist left the rest of the details up to the desire of the seal's owner. The remaining part of the seal was polished in preparation for carving a scene or writing on it. Thus, the seal was prepared to save time, as it is in the work process and has not been completed.

In the previous two seals, it is noted that it is incomplete and that a large area of the scene lacks any inscription or writing. The artist may have intentionally placed this space and left it to request the buyer to fill it with the inscription he desires. To save time, the seal is equipped with a basic engraving, such as an engraving of the image of a god or a king, and the addition of some elements or writing required later by the owner. Perhaps the scene of the king or the god was carried out to occupy part of the seal, and the task of writing the intended text was assigned to the scribe specialized in writing to occupy the other part of it; For that reason the seal appears incomplete.

#### 8. Cylinder Seal number IM 192501 (Fig. 15)

A perforated cylinder seal made of marble. The seal shows a scene of a man being presented to the king, who appears on the right side. The king is clean-shaven, facing to the left, sitting on a throne, his right hand raised to the top parallel to the mouth. He holds a cup with it while his left hand is folded and placed at the waist. He wears a headgear and a long dress that covers his left

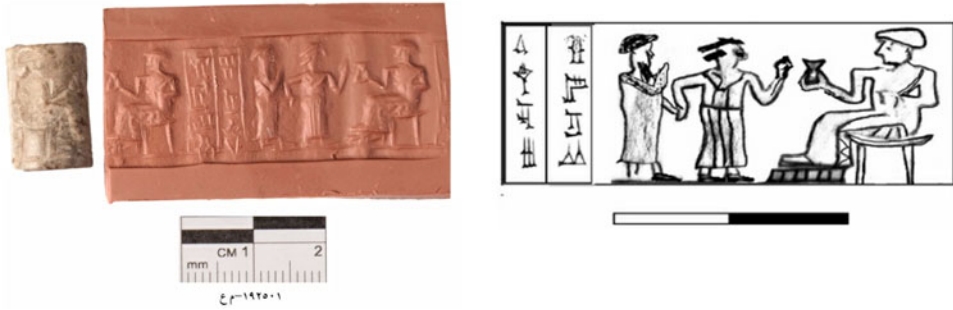


Fig. 15. IM 192501

shoulder while leaving his right shoulder bare. The throne on which he sits is simple; in front of the king stands a goddess, and her right hand is bent back to hold the hand of the worshipper. Her left hand is raised to the top and the palm is open to greet the seated king. She wears a horned crown and a long dress with vertical folds reaching her feet. A man stands behind her with his right hand raised to the level of the face, and his left hand extends forward to be held by the goddess. He wears a headdress and a long dress, while behind the king there are two lines of cuneiform writing.

1. *i-ib<sup>2</sup>-na-ni*                      Ibnani
2. *DUMU ma-la-kum*                Son of Malakum

A *malaku* is a cut of meat attested at Mari, Nippur and Tell ed-Der (CAD M/1 153). The personal name *Malaku(m)* is attested as a personal name in van Soldt 1994 no. 74, 3.

#### 9. Cylinder Seal number IM 192665 (Fig. 16)

A perforated cylinder seal, made of marble, the surface of the seal contained the scene of a man being presented by a (minor) goddess to a king seated on a throne. He has a long beard that reaches the level of the chest, arranged in vertical tufts. His right hand is bent and extended to the front, and he holds a cup with it, his left hand is placed on the waist. He wears a head cover and a long dress.

A minor deity (possibly the Lama goddess) stands in front of him wearing a horned crown, under which her hair is visible, her right hand is bent back to hold the man's hand, and her left hand is bent and raised in front of her upwards with an open palm. She wears a long dress with vertical folds, and a man stands behind her, his right hand raised to the level of the face while his left hand is extended forward to be held by the hand of the minor goddess. He is bareheaded and wears a long robe.



Fig. 16. IM 192665



Fig. 17. 196286

The symbol of the god Shamash is represented by a crescent open to the top, and inside it, a radiant four-pointed star is depicted in the upper part of the space between the seated king and the secondary goddess standing in front of him. It is noted that there is a text of cuneiform writing behind the king, consisting of two fields that are not clearly defined and thus far not legible.

10. *Cylinder Seal number IM 196286 (Fig. 17)*

A perforated cylinder seal made of hematite, the surface of the seal is carved with a scene of a man presenting to the king; it shows on the right side a king sitting on a throne. He has a long beard that reaches chest level, his right hand is slightly bent and stretched forward, his left hand is placed on the waist, headgear on his head, and he is wearing a long dress that reaches the feet, with horizontal folds. A minor goddess stands in front of him, her right hand is folded back to be held by the hand of the man standing behind her, and the left hand is raised upwards. She wears a horned crown on her head and a long dress that reaches her feet. Behind her is a man with his right hand raised to the level of the head, wearing a long robe with vertical folds. Also, we can see a crescent on the upper part in the space between the seated king and the intermediate goddess standing before him.

Below the crescent, a scorpion is also depicted. From the Kassite period the scorpion was considered a symbol of the goddess Išhara, a goddess of the underworld (Black/Green 1992: 160). It is noted that there is a text of cuneiform writing behind the king consisting of two fields, which are not legible.

11. *Cylinder Seal number IM 186665 (Fig. 18)*

A perforated cylinder seal made of limestone, part of which is broken. It shows a scene of a man presenting to a seated king, showing on the right side a king seated on a throne with a backrest. That wide throne is reminiscent of the one on seal no 7. He is clean-shaven, his right arm is left naked, and his right hand is slightly bent and pulled ahead. He holds a cup with it; his left hand is bent in to the abdomen, and he wears a headdress that resembles a turban in a hemispherical shape, and he wears a long garment that reaches the feet with horizontal folds that reveal the right shoulder and arms.



Fig. 18. IM 186665

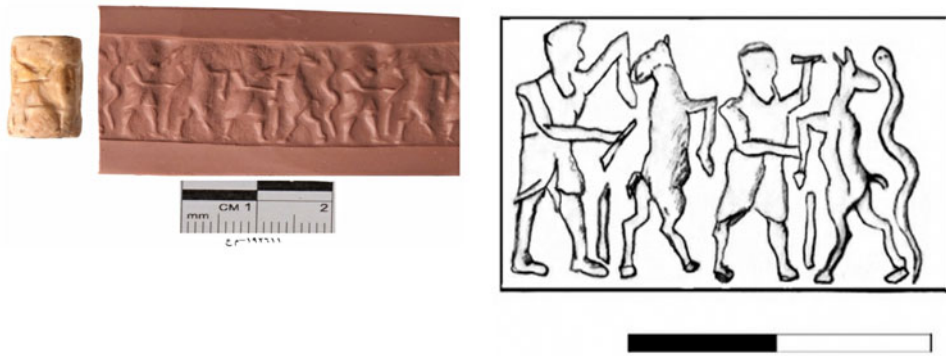


Fig. 19. IM 192611

A minor goddess stands in front of him wearing a horned crown; her left hand is raised in front of her at the level of the mouth, while the right hand is bent back to be held by the hand of the man. She also wears a long dress that reaches the feet. A man stands behind her, extending his left hand to the minor goddess in front of him. His right hand is raised to the level of the face. He wears headgear on his head and a long dress. A crescent is pointing upwards in the upper part of the area between the seated king and the mediating goddess standing before him. The 'stickball' is also depicted in the space between the seated king and the person standing before him, while the star sign, a symbol of the goddess Inanna/Ištar (van Buren 1945: 82) is depicted between the gods. A snake is depicted behind the seated king, extending over the whole height of the seal-face. The snake, known in Sumerian as MUŠ, is depicted on seals since the Warka period, single or compound, especially in the Old Babylonian period. See van Buren 1945 pl. 1, fig. 1-5; Abou Assaf 1983 pl. 13, fig. 102; Porada 1948 pl 56, fig. 304E. There is also a scorpion behind the king at the top of the scene between the king and the snake.

### 12. Cylinder Seal number IM 192611 (Fig. 19)

A perforated cylinder seal made of marble with a scene of a human struggle with animals. The scene includes four elements. First, a standing man appears in the middle, facing towards the right. Standing to his side is a deer or a goat, standing on its hind legs, the man holding the front legs of the deer standing in front of him with his right hand. The man holds a dagger in his raised left hand aimed at the deer's head, which turns to the right side. To the left of this man stands another deer turning its head towards another man standing on the left side of the scene, and he is facing towards the right, holding in his left hand what looks like a dagger trying to plant it in the back of the deer while extending his right hand forward towards the deer. The two men have similar figures, and the features of their faces are not apparent. Each of them wears a short loincloth that is open from the front. A snake is depicted on the left side behind the man in a vertical orientation, and it has a wavy body that occupies the entire height of the seal-face.

Scenes of conflict appear on the seals since the Warka period (Amiet 1961 pl. 40, fig. 612), continuing after that, and scenes of conflict also appeared on cylinder seals in the Old Babylonian Period, although rarely (Al-Gailani-Werr 1981: 130, fig. 40, 55; *ibid.* 132, fig. 68). The deer, Sumerian DARA<sub>3</sub>.MAŠ, which corresponds to the word *ayalu* in the Akkadian language, is depicted on cylinder seals since the Warka Period, and continued thereafter in scenes of conflict and with the naked hero, or in the form of two similar animals standing on either side of a tree. Also it is depicted in the Ur III period and the Old Babylonian Period similar to the previous scenes. See Abou Assaf 1983 pl. 8, fig. 29.

### 13. Cylinder Seal number IM 196287 (Fig. 20)

A perforated cylinder seal made of diorite, bearing signs of drill work (Collon 2007 fig. 7.5). Six figures are carved on the surface of the seal in a standing position. On the right side of the scene, a naked hero appears facing towards the right. The features of the head are unclear. The hands are



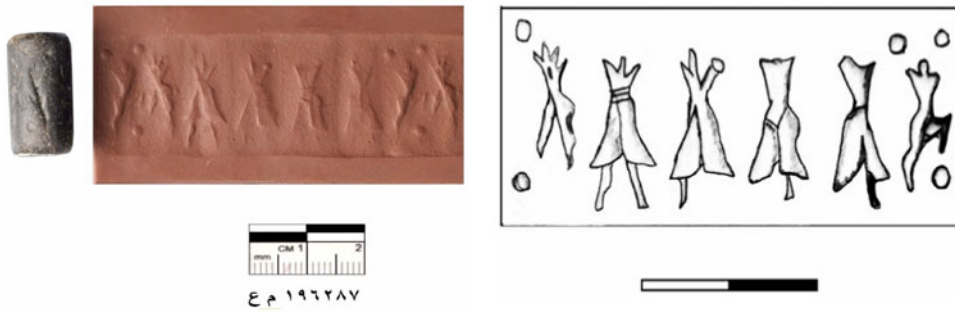


Fig. 20. IM 196287

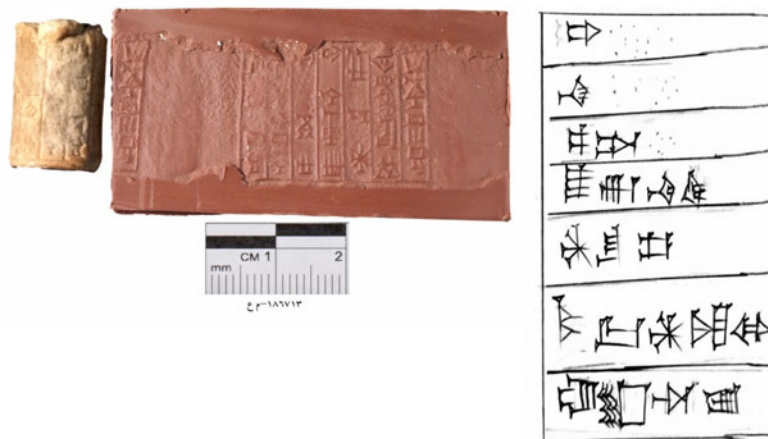


Fig. 21. IM 186713

raised upwards and are not clear. His left leg is raised and bent forward. His body rests with his right foot on the ground, and a naked hero also faces him, facing to the left with the same figure and body details, raising his right leg. He stands on the ground with his left leg. Behind him, there are four people, three of them are walking to the left. The last person is walking in the opposite direction to the right. All the figures have heads and hands that are not clearly defined, and each of them wears an open robe that reaches the knee with a belt consisting of two turns on the waist.

#### 14. Cylinder Seal number IM 186713 (Fig. 21)

A perforated cylinder seal made of limestone containing seven fields of cuneiform writing. The impression of this seal was found on six clay tablets from the city of Eshnunna during the American excavations (Frayne 1990: 497, Bilalama E4.5.3.2004). Using these, the missing part of the text in the first two lines can be restored. The first and second lines are damaged, which held the king's name and role. The remaining lines include an inscription indicating the name and occupation of the owner of the seal. For the available information on the ruler Bilalama see Reichel 2001.

- |   |                                  |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1. <i>bi-[la-la-ma]</i>                         | Bilalama!                        |
| 2. <i>na-ra-am</i> [ <sup>d</sup> tišpak]       | beloved [of the god Tishpak]     |
| 3. ENS <sub>2</sub>                             | ruler                            |
| 4. <i>aš<sub>2</sub>-nun-na</i> <sup>ki</sup>   | of the (city of) Eshnunna        |
| 5. <i>il<sub>3</sub>-šu-dan</i>                 | Išū-dan                          |
| 6. DUMU UR <sup>d</sup> NIN-SUN <sub>2</sub>    | son of Ur-Ninsun                 |
| 7. DUB.SAR IR <sub>3</sub> -ZU/-su <sub>2</sub> | the scribe (is) your/his servant |



Fig. 22. IM 186714

15. *Cylinder Seal number IM 186714 (Fig. 22)*

A perforated cylinder seal of limestone containing two columns of cuneiform writing while leaving enough space to implement the desired scene on the surface of the seal next to the writing.

- |   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| 1. <i>u<sub>2</sub>-nam-be<sub>2</sub>-el<sup>1</sup></i> | Unambel <sup>2</sup>  |
| 2. <i>ša<sup>1</sup>(TA)-ra-nu-um</i>                     | the king <sup>1</sup> |

The reading of line 1 is insecure. The sign here read as EL looks more like NIN. As for line 2, there is no word *šarrānum* listed in the dictionaries, so this too must remain insecure.

16. *Cylinder Seal number IM 196207 (Fig. 23)*

A cylinder seal, not perforated, made of marble, containing four lines of cuneiform writing. There is enough blank space to insert the required scene beside the writing. The writing on the surface of the seal indicates the name of a woman and her

- |                                       |                    |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. <i>qa<sub>2</sub>-na-na-ar-tum</i> | Qananartum         |
| 2. <i>DUMU.MUNUS bu-ru-šum</i>        | Burušum's daughter |

A scribe called Burušum is attested at Sippar during the reign of Šabium (1844-1831 BC) in Dekiere 1994: 58, no. 27, 32. There is no indication that this is the same person.

17. *Cylinder Seal number IM 196364 (Fig. 24)*

A perforated Cylinder seal made of diorite. The seal is carved in a geometric shape, consisting of straight, parallel, irregular, and intersecting lines, forming successive lozenges and connected in a single pattern. Something similar to this seal has been found in Eshnunna previously, see Frankfort 1955 pl. 89, fig. 946.

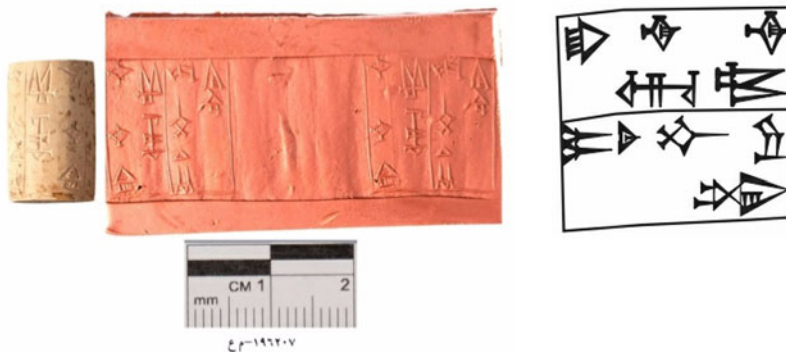


Fig. 23. IM 196207

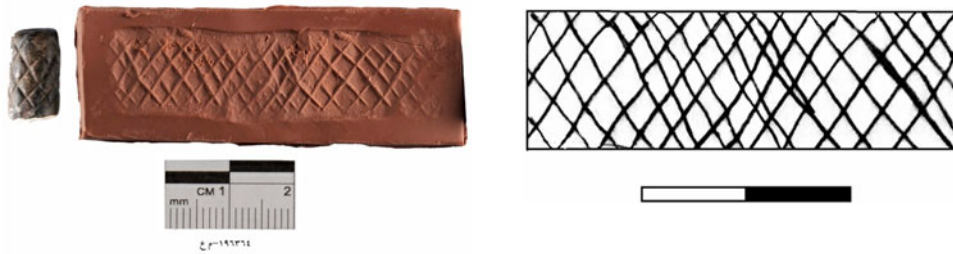


Fig. 24. IM 196364

Geometric decorations have been carried out using intersecting lines since the Halaf Period on pottery vessels. Some researchers believe that the decorative elements are nothing but symbols of the forces of nature and have become decorative elements (Al-Sabhan 2010: 116-119).

### Conclusion

All of these seals date back to the old Babylonian period. They are made of various stones, but marble stone is the most frequent. Most are in good condition, and some are incomplete. Their height ranges between 1.1-4 cm and their diameter ranges between 1-2 cm. Various scenes are included, most of which expressed obedience to the king, while some contained a scene of a person presenting to the king. One seal included a scene of the hero's struggle with an animal, and another seal had geometric decoration, while several seals contained cuneiform writing only.

The figures in the scene are all seated and standing, gods and humans, standing or sitting on one level of the floor, with their heads ending at the same level, and they are all depicted with a side view of the head and lower limbs but with a frontal view of the torso.

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يقدم هذا المقال دراسة عن سبعة عشر أختامًا أسطوانية تم اكتشافها في مدينة أشنونا (تل أسمر)، والتي تعد من أهم المدن خلال الفترة البابلية القديمة في بلاد ما بين النهرين. هذه القطع هي جزء من مجموعة كبيرة من المكتشفات والتماثيل والفخار والقطع المعدنية والنصوص المسمارية، وكذلك مجموعة الأختام الأسطوانية، وجميعها وجدت في (البيوت الخاصة) في الجزء الجنوبي من المدينة، والتي اكتشفت خلال التنقيبات العراقية في الموقع، منذ أكثر من عشرين عامًا، عكست المكتشفات في مدينة أشنونا ومنها الأختام الأسطوانية، المكانة الاجتماعية لسكان هذه المنازل ولأنهم ومعتقداتهم الدينية. وبذلك سلطت الضوء على أهمية هذه المدينة وضرورة استمرار أعمال التنقيب فيها.