

TRUE OR FALSE ?
GENUINE AND FALSE CYLINDER SEALS AT
ANDREWS UNIVERSITY *

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In 1964 Andrews University received through Siegfried H. Horn five cylinder seals from a family in whose possession they had been for many years. Two of these cylinder seals are genuine, the others are not. What makes it possible to recognize some as genuine, others as forgeries? Sometimes it is very difficult indeed to distinguish a modern forgery from ancient cylinder seals. Especially carefully done recent work is hard to detect because our eye does not readily pick up those features which are distinctive of our own time. In imitations of ancient cylinders produced several decades ago, however, it is easier to recognize the features characteristic of the modern style which prevailed in those years. Rather than enter here into a general discussion of cylinder seal

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forgeries, which have been the subject of several studies,¹ I propose to analyse the two genuine cylinders of Andrews University in great detail. Such an analysis should bring out the criteria of the genuine cylinders and make the difference between them and the forgeries quite obvious.

Andrews University Cylinder Seal, No. 1. The first cylinder (Pls. I: 1, II: 1, V: 1) shows a seated, bearded god extending his hand in welcome to three approaching deities. The fact that gods are represented is indicated by the figures' headgear, the horned miter of divinity. As a matter of fact, our first problem is posed by the nature of the miter worn by the approaching gods. It is marked by oblique parallel lines which seem to indicate hair. Rather than speak of a miter and assume that a horned cap was placed on the head of the figure, we should imagine that the horns were attached to a band or diadem which would leave the hair on the crown of the head visible. This impression is strengthened by the way in which the hair hangs down in the back, seemingly continuous from the top of the head. The first and third gods have a beard indicated by several parallel lines whereas the deity in the middle has only one such line, which does not unequivocally indicate a beard. However, it seems likely that the omission of further lines was due to the careless work of the seal cutter, who also failed to show clearly the long hair hanging down the neck and back of the third god.

All three figures extend their cupped hands as if expecting to receive something in them. This posture is typical of minor

¹ *Corpus of Ancient Near Eastern Seals in North American Collections*, I, Edith Porada, *The Collection of the Pierpont Morgan Library* (New York, 1948), 158-163 (hereafter cited as *CANES*, I); Briggs Buchanan, *Catalogue of Ancient Near Eastern Seals in the Ashmolean Museum*, I (Oxford, 1966), 213-222 (hereafter cited as *Ashmolean Museum*); Eva Strommenger, "Rollsiegelfälschungen," *Berliner Jahrbuch für Vor- und Frühgeschichte*, I (1961), 196-200; R. M. Boehmer, "Fälschungen—Repliken—Originale, ein Beitrag zur mesopotamischen Glyptik des dritten Jahrtausends," *ibid.*, pp. 201-210.

gods standing before a deity of grain ² on cylinder seals of the time of the Dynasty of Akkad (*ca.* 2334-2154 B.C.³). Subject and date of the cylinder can thus be determined from this characteristic iconographic feature although the seated figure is not clearly defined as a grain-god because he lacks the plants usually sprouting from the grain-god's shoulders as in Pl. II: A, a cylinder seal in the Pierpont Morgan Library.⁴ Only a short vertical line above the god's upper arm might be a cursory indication of such plants. All that can be said with certainty is that he is a major god in comparison with those who approach him because he sits while they stand, he has a multi-tiered robe which looks richer than their skirts with vertical pleats, and his hair is gathered in a chignon separated into an upper and a lower part by a band which circles the head, as seen in monuments of this and the foregoing period.⁵ Doubtless the chignon was considered a more elaborate coiffure than hair loosely hanging in the back, which is more characteristic of goddesses than of gods in representations of the Akkad period.⁶ In fact, it seems quite possible that loosely hanging hair differentiates goddesses from human figures in cylinder seals of the Akkad age. Women are shown

² This feature was noted in *CANES*, I, 26, and by Boehmer, *Die Entwicklung der Glyptik während der Akkad Zeit* (Berlin, 1965), p. 96 (hereafter cited as Boehmer, *Glyptik*).

³ The dates here cited are taken from J. A. Brinkman, "Mesopotamian Chronology of the Historical Period," Appendix to A. L. Oppenheim, *Mesopotamia, Portrait of a Dead Civilization* (Chicago, 1965), pp. 335 ff.

⁴ For other examples of male (that is bearded) grain-gods, see Boehmer, *Glyptik*, Abb. 532, 535, 538, 547 (our Pl. III: C).

⁵ See Strommenger and Max Hirmer, *5000 Years of the Art of Mesopotamia* (New York, 1964), Fig. 115, fragment of a diorite stele of Sargon of Akkad, and Pl. XV, helmet of "Prince Meskalamdug" from Ur.

⁶ None of the female figures with the hairdress described in the next paragraph wears the horned miter of divinity, although it must be admitted that a similar hairdress is also occasionally worn by superhuman creatures such as the bearded snake-god of Boehmer, *Glyptik*, Abb. 587. For the bird-man with this hairdress, see below, note 10.

with their hair tied up in the back, the ends of hair apparently combed over some device which created a narrow chignon with horizontal top.⁷ In the profile renderings of the cylinder seals this chignon often looks like a point sticking up above the band encircling the entire coiffure, as for example in *CANES*, I, 245.

Similarly male figures who do not have their hair cut to neck-length but have let it grow long (perhaps a prerogative of the highest social group, to judge by the seal of the scribe Kalki, Pl. III: B) never wear it loose but only in the elaborate chignon⁸ described above as the hairdress of the seated god in our cylinder, No. 1. The rare occurrences in cylinders of

⁷ This description is based on the stone wig in the British Museum inscribed with the dedication of an official of Shulgi, a king of the Third Dynasty of Ur (2094-2047 B.C.) (see D. J. Wiseman, "The Goddess Lama at Ur," *Iraq*, XXII [1960], Pl. XXII: b). Wiseman translated the words of the dedication describing the wig as "head-dress of femininity" (*ibid.*, p. 168). The fact that the back of the wig had to serve as a tablet for the inscription, however, may have resulted in a rendering which altered the actual appearance of the ends of hair in the back.

At any rate, this "head-dress of femininity" differs from the chignons of male figures in representations of the Akkad period. A statement to the contrary by Agnes Spycket, "La coiffure féminine en Mésopotamie des origines à la 1re Dynastie de Babylone," *RA*, XLVIII (1954), 169, 170, fig. 61, was based on the atypical cylinder from Ur discussed in our note 8.

⁸ The curious cylinder seal from Ur, Leonard Woolley, *Ur Excavations II: The Royal Cemetery* (Oxford, 1934), Pl. 206, No. 192 (U. 9721), shows in exceptional manner an enthroned male and a female figure in a banquet scene with an attendant, all with the same type of chignon as in the cylinder of Kalki, our Pl. III: B. To the right is a figure with a cap of unusual shape. Unusual too are the faces of the figures, the fact that the female figure seems to pour a libation and the material from which the seal was made: hematite. Yet it was found in Grave 681 according to the publication (Text volume p. 350) and had a cap of copper which would confirm the authenticity of this cylinder which I would have otherwise tended to doubt. At any rate, the representation of an attendant with the same hairdress as the enthroned male person is unusual and therefore does not suffice to disprove the suggestion made in the text that the chignon for men was a sign of very elevated social position.

mature Akkad style of male gods with hair hanging loosely over their shoulders depict gods of war and their opponents,⁹ or gods of vegetation as in our No. 1 and on the seals of Pls. II: A and III: C. It was probably meant to suggest that the gods so represented possessed primitive force close to nature. The fact that the bull-man and nude bearded hero in scenes of contest with lions, bulls, and other powerful animals wear their hair loose confirms this interpretation as does the occasional occurrence of a long-haired bird-man.¹⁰ Under these circumstances it is interesting to note that the attendants who open the gates for the ascending sun-god often also have long loose hair.¹¹ Their connection with the figures here discussed remains to be discovered.

Not only do hairdress and costume indicate the high rank of the seated god in our cylinder as against the figures approaching him, but the composition of the scene determines the seated figure as the major person. The arms of the standing or walking gods point toward the seated figure whose greater mass impressively occupies far more space than the standing gods. Moreover, attention is drawn to the seated god's bent arm, by the fact that its lines are echoed in more rounded form by the large crescent moon above. Whatever the meaning of the symbol, in the present context it seems to have been associated with the seated god.

Beyond the facts here noted from an examination of the scene, nothing can be said about its subject because the

⁹ Boehmer, *Glyptik*, Abb. 346 (for the attacking god), and Abb. 302 (*Diyala*, No. 703) and Abb. 352 for the victim.

¹⁰ Boehmer, *Glyptik*, Abb. 502. Most frequently, however, that figure has the hair tied up in a loop like the hairdress described above for women (which is also occasionally worn by male figures), e.g., *ibid.*, Abb. 493, 495, 503, 512, 519. Very rarely the bird-man has the hairdress most frequent for human male figures as seen in elaborate execution in the cylinder of Kalki, our Pl. III: B, and more commonly ending in only one curl above the neck (e.g., *Ashmolean Museum*, No. 367b).

¹¹ Boehmer, *Glyptik*, Abb. 419-423, 428.

literary compositions involving gods of vegetation,¹² which are all later than the Akkad period, do not describe worship and supplication of a major god by a group of minor deities.

The engraving of the cylinder is crude and careless but it is not incompetent. Some forms seem to have been ground off mechanically, apparently by holding the cylinder against a revolving object with a cutting edge. Smooth forms which are obviously ground off in such a manner are the parallel arms of the standing gods or the horizontal lines of the seated god's stool. These forms are all horizontal while the short vertical bars of the stool were carved with a graver less smoothly and in a shallower manner (See Pl. V: 1). Obviously it was easy to grind a short line if the cylinder was held vertically against a horizontal cutting edge, but to make a vertical line the seal must have been held parallel to the cutting edge, a procedure which would have produced a longer line than was needed for the vertical bar of the stool.

Such use of a mechanical grinding or cutting device to produce smooth lines of uniform width in the design, seems to have been introduced into Mesopotamian glyptic art in several periods when certain motifs had become so standardized that a mere indication of figures and objects sufficed to evoke the entire scene. Examples are cylinders of the Early Akkad period showing the theme of a hero in the center of a group of beasts of prey and horned animals.¹³ Even the so-called Brocade style of the First Early Dynastic period was probably largely produced by such means.¹⁴ Hence we

¹² "Dumuzi and Enkimdu: the Dispute between the Shepherd-God and the Farmer-God," text translated by S. N. Kramer in *ANET*, pp. 41, 42, reconstructed from three tablets dated in the beginning of the second millennium B.C.

¹³ E.g., *CANES*, I, Nos. 132, 135, 136; Boehmer, *Glyptik*, Abb. 45.

¹⁴ This can be rather clearly seen in *Diyala*, No. 257, where the cut shapes overlap each other. See also *Diyala*, Nos. 363, 873, for good examples demonstrating a technique of probably mechanical grinding of lines and shapes.

are probably justified in suggesting a relatively late date in the Akkad period for our seal No. 1, although some cylinders showing a related use of a cutting device for scenes involving gods with flounced robes have been found in *Tell Asmar* in levels dated Early Akkad, like *Diyala* 577 and 582.

The major forms of the gods' figures may also have been produced by some mechanical device such as a drill with a revolving point, but subsequent work with a graver has eliminated all traces of tool marks. Even on an unfinished cylinder seal from *Tell Asmar*, Pl. III: C, I cannot determine the tools employed in the preliminary blocking—or rather hollowing—out of the figures.

The faces of the figures in No. 1 are indicated by thin lines, cursorily drawn: a large hook for the nose which also determines the space for the eye socket, a line or two for the eyelids and brow, parallel lines or lines meeting at an angle for the prominently projecting lips. It is interesting to see how varied are the lines and forms indicating the faces of figures in cylinders of the Akkad period, as a comparison of the faces in No. 1 and Pls. II: A and III: B illustrates. This variation suggested that the characteristics of Akkadian style reside in the general proportions of the human face but that the details of the stylization were worked out individually by each seal cutter.

The last feature to be engraved in No. 1 was probably the figures' feet, beginning at the left and ending with the seated god whose feet had to be severely shortened in order to retain the necessary interval between his feet. This shows how important such intervals, which assured the clarity and rhythm of the composition, seemed to the engraver.

Andrews University Cylinder Seal, No. 2. The second cylinder of Andrews University, Pls. I: 2, II: 2, and V: 2, considerably smaller than the first, bears the inscription of an official of Gudea, Ensi of the southern city-state of Lagash, who ruled shortly after the Akkad period and before the Third Dynasty of Ur, that is, between *ca.* 2154 and 2112 B.C.

The inscription reads:

Gù-dé-a	Ur-ba-[ú]	Gudea, ensi of Lagash
en ₅ -si	dub-sar	Ur-Bau the scribe
ŠIR.BUR.KI (= Lagaš) ¹⁵	ir-zu	(is) your servant

This cylinder, which can be dated in the time of Gudea, is a welcome addition to the small number of cylinders inscribed for Gudea himself,¹⁶ or his son,¹⁷ or his officials.¹⁸ All these cylinders so far known show a worshiper led by minor deities toward a major one. The scene of our No. 2, showing a different motif, two heroes overpowering a water buffalo, therefore adds a new criterion for dating in Gudea's time this specific version of a contest with a powerful animal. It is important to note that the composition includes only three figures: two figures flanking the victim, instead of the two pairs of fighting figures common on cylinders of the Akkad age, such as Pl. III: D. In the time of the Third Dynasty of Ur the scheme of three figures dominates the renderings of contest scenes; the

¹⁵ I owe the reading of the inscription to Erica Reiner who noted that the normal writing of Lagash is ŠIR.BUR.LA.KI.

¹⁶ A combined drawing of several impressions of Gudea's cylinder seal on tablets from Tello was reproduced in Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals* (London, 1939), p. 143, text fig. 37, from L. Delaporte, *Catalogue des cylindres orientaux . . . Musée de Louvre*, I (Paris, 1920), 12, Pl. 108; photographs of partial impressions are seen *op. cit.*, Pl. 10: 8, 10.

¹⁷ I assume that the person who calls himself Lugal-š[ag-g]a, scribe, son of Gudea on the cylinder seal from Tello reproduced by André Parrot, *Glyptique mésopotamienne: fouilles de Lagash (Tello) et de Larsa (Senkereh)* (1931-1933) (Paris, 1954), Pl. VIII: 131 (transcription and translation by Maurice Lambert, *op. cit.*, p. 80, s.v. 131), was the son of the ruler of Lagash since the style of that fine cylinder closely corresponds to that of CANES, I, No. 274, the cylinder of an official of Gudea. It seems, however, as if the inscription on the cylinder from Tello was either secondary or very badly planned because the last two signs appear outside the frame for the inscription. I wonder whether this could have been a second seal of Gudea which was re-used by one of his sons, for it seems to me that the original inscription might have been intended to fill two upper and one lower case, consisting of three lines as in the impressions of the seal bearing Gudea's inscription (see above, note 16).

¹⁸ CANES, I, 274, and L. de Clercq, *Collection de Clercq*, I, *Cylindres orientaux* (Paris, 1888), Pl. IX, 84.

arrangement of the figures in the present cylinder therefore suggests that the origin of the preference for this tripartite compositional scheme should be sought in the time of Gudea.¹⁹

The posture of the hero at the right, holding the animal up by a hind foot, grasping its tail and placing his foot on the animal's neck in an effort to break it—at the same time suggesting his victory over the powerful creature—as well as the posture of the hero at the left who is about to tear the animal apart by the hindlegs are both derived from cylinders of the Akkad period like Pl. III: D. A new posture, however, is the one showing the second hero placing his foot on the animal's underside near its sexual organ. New, too, is the arc formed by the outward bent arms of the two heroes which converge on the upward pointing leg of their victim, and the general effect of a joint attack which results from this concentration of poses seen earlier in two separate pairs of fighters and now concentrated on one victim. It is quite possible that this new tripartite scheme owed its origin to the esthetic predilection of some outstanding artists of the period.²⁰ It is also conceivable, however, that the expressive

¹⁹ It is perhaps significant that the dated occurrence of a tripartite compositional scheme of a contest motif comes from the time of Šuturul, the last king of the Akkad Dynasty (*Diyala* 701 = Boehmer, *Glyptik*, Abb. 762a, 762b). There is no parallel known from that period, however, for the scheme of two heroes with a victim as in our No. 2.

²⁰ One of the noblest designs on cylinder seals, found on the seal of a priest, perhaps from Lagash and probably of Gudea's time, *CANES*, I, No. 267, shows a tripartite composition in which a lion-headed eagle grasps two ibexes. While the motif goes back to Early Dynastic times (e.g., Parrot, *Tello* (Paris, 1948), Pl. VII(a), VIII(a), it was rendered in an inherently dramatic way by the artist of this cylinder seal. The composition of the fallen ibexes and the lion-headed eagle soaring above them, together with the delicately modeled bodies of the horned animals, contrasting with the spread wings of the bird, produce this effect. It is possible that the same artist created the original version of the tripartite contest found in No. 2 from which I would assume the latter to have been copied (I do not think that both cylinders were made by the same engraver, because our cylinder seems to have less detail in the head of the horned animal).

scheme of the attack of two heroes on a bull was meant to illustrate a mythological event such as the contest of Gilgamesh and Enkidu with the Bull of Heaven.²¹

Unfortunately, No. 2 is made of soft serpentine and much of the engraving is worn away and the remains are difficult to discern. Nevertheless, one becomes aware of the contrast between the slender and graceful forms of the human figures and the massive shape of the buffalo. The effect is that of a beast so powerful that one hero alone could not have conquered it; only the concerted effort of both heroes could have resulted in victory. Both the subtle change in the ancient theme of contest with animals and the compositional devices by which it was illustrated are an innovation in the glyptic art of the Post Akkad period.

Both cylinders share a slender form with slightly incurving sides and expertly drilled perforation which is slightly widened to a narrow, bevelled ledge about $\frac{1}{2}$ mm wide at the lower end of the Akkadian cylinder, No. 1, and about 1 mm wide at the lower end of No. 2. A few cylinders of the Akkad period show the same feature as No. 1²² which is probably connected with the way the seal was mounted. In view of the fact that the few extant capped cylinders of the period have not been reproduced with the caps removed, one does not know whether or not this feature was present.

The cylinders were polished but not to a very high gloss, merely to be agreeable to sight and touch. Perhaps the most obvious difference between them and the forgeries, Pl. I: 3

²¹ See the account of this event in E. A. Speiser's translation in *ANET*, p. 85.

²² Examples from the cylinder seals in the Pierpont Morgan Library in which I have noted this feature are: *CANES*, I, Nos. 198, 202, 207, 250. Two of these cylinders show representations of the water-god, one of a grain-god and one of a banquet scene. These subjects may have been accidentally engraved on cylinders with the slight ledge and again it may have been done purposefully. One will have to watch for this feature in other collections before commenting on it.

and 4 lies in the dull and harsh²³ stones employed for the latter by the modern seal cutters. No. 3 is made of gypseous alabaster grooved at both ends (Pl. IV: E-2) to imitate the core of the Persian Gulf shell frequently employed for Mesopotamian cylinder seals of the third millennium B.C. In the better worked cylinder seals made of such shell the ends show the section through the core which produced a pleasing coil pattern of various shades of light brown (Pl. IV: E-1). In contrast to such patterns, the alabaster of No. 3 is an undifferentiated dull greyish white. No. 4 is even less carefully shaped; only No. 5 (Pl. V: 5) has a nice regular form and a narrow well-drilled perforation. The soft red stone from which that cylinder was carved, however, is unparalleled among the genuine ancient cylinders of Mesopotamia, a fact which indicates the spuriousness of the piece.

Andrews University Cylinder Seals Nos. 3-5. That all three cylinders, Nos. 3-5 are forgeries is quite obvious from the bungled inscriptions. These suggest that the prototypes for the seals were examples of the Isin Larsa and Old Babylonian periods (20th to 17th centuries B.C.) in which inscriptions of two or three lines are common. A scene with an enthroned king like that of the Old Babylonian cylinder in the Pierpont Morgan Library, Pl. IV: F, was probably copied for No. 3 although the enthroned figure was placed in the middle of the scene by leaving out the suppliant goddess at the left. The large fan held by the short-kilted attendant and the flower before him are completely foreign to the repertory of the genuine cylinder seals of that period. The presence of such incongruous stylistic elements, introduced into a work of art by persons not sufficiently familiar with the style of the age

²³ I am using here the terminology employed by Isabella Drew, Research Associate in the Arthur M. Sackler Laboratory of Columbia University, with whom I have discussed the technical problems concerning these cylinders. The approach of this scholar whose training was in chemistry and mineralogy, has elicited attention to features which might have otherwise gone unnoticed. Her observations have been gratefully incorporated in this article.



1



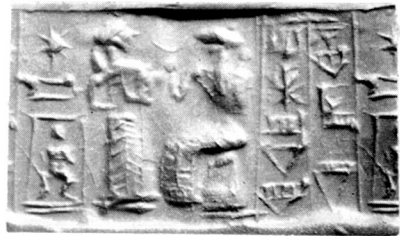
2



3



4



5

Impressions of Andrews University Cylinder Seals Nos. 1-5. Size: 1:1.

PLATE II



1



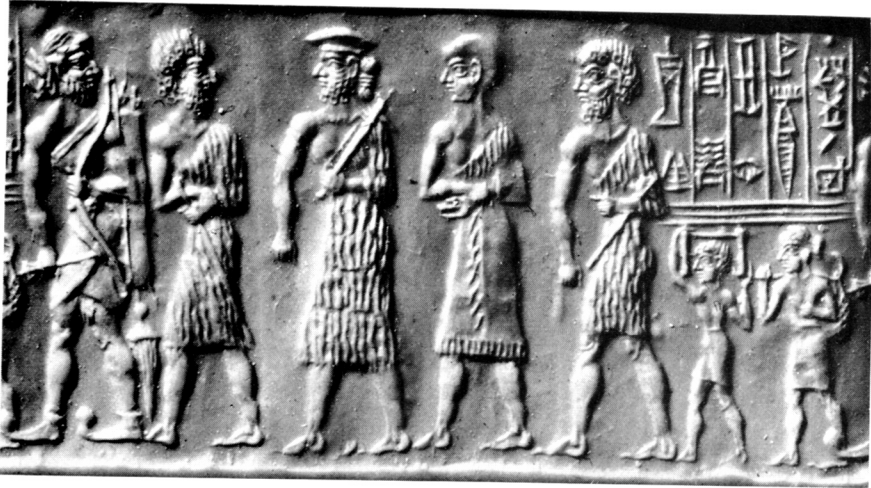
2



A

1 and 2. Impressions of Andrews University Cylinder Seals Nos. 1 and 2.
Size: ca. 1: 1½

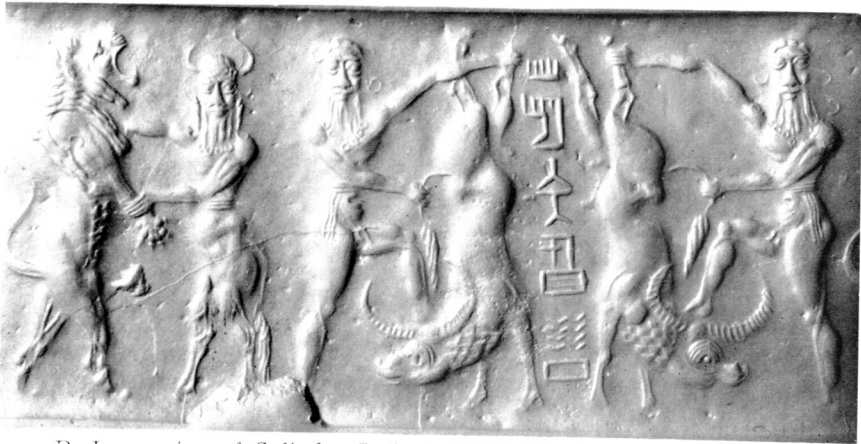
A. Impression of Cylinder Seal no. 207 in the Pierpont Morgan Library.
Size: ca. 1: 1½. Published: *CANES*, I, No. 207.



B



C



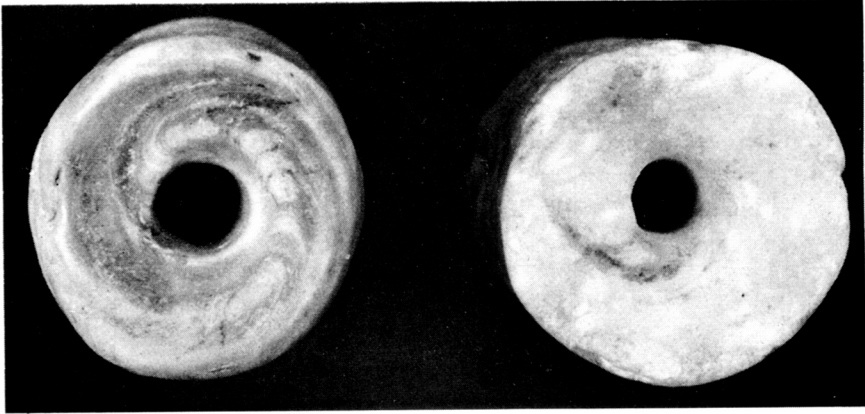
D

B. Impression of Cylinder Seal of Kalki, No. 89137 in the British Museum. Published: Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, Pl. XXIV: c; Boehmer, *Glyptik*, Abb. 717, etc.

C. Impression of Unfinished Cylinder Seal from *Tell Asmar*, No. As. 32: 598, in the Iraq Museum. Published: Frankfort, *Diyala*, No. 611; Boehmer, *Glyptik*, Abb. 547.

D. Impression of Cylinder Seal from *Tell el-Wilayah*, in the Iraq Museum. Published: T. A. Madhlum, *Sumer*, XVI (1960), Pl. 5: 3; Boehmer, *Glyptik*, Abb. 201.

PLATE IV



E-1

E-2



F

E-1. End of Cylinder Seal No. 156 in the Pierpont Morgan Library.
E-2. End of Andrews University Cylinder Seal No. 3.
F. Impression of Cylinder Seal No. 323 in the Pierpont Morgan
Library. Size: *ca.* 1: 1½. Published: *CANES*, I, No. 323.



I



2



3



5

Photographs of Andrews University Cylinder Seals Nos. 1, 2, 3 and 5. Size: *ca.* 1: 2½.

which they are trying to imitate, often facilitates recognition of forgeries of works of all periods. Other examples in our seals are the assyrianizing garments and hairdress of the figures in No. 4 which has an inscription of Babylonian type. In No. 5 the scheme of two figures, one seated and one standing, and their hairdress vaguely resemble Kassite cylinder seals of the 15th to 13th centuries²⁴ but the pattern of the garments and the figure of a bow-legged dwarf are derived from Old Babylonian examples.

Instead of pursuing further the entertaining game of discovering in detail where the forger or forgers found the different elements of their designs, let us see what we can learn from these and other engraved stones cut in modern times which will give us new insights into the achievements of the ancient artist. The latter had the advantage of a long apprenticeship²⁵ during which he learned to use the traditional tools, the bow-drill and gravers, first of copper, later

²⁴ Kassite cylinders like that of de Clercq, *op. cit.*, 257, 258, come to mind although it is possible that this resemblance is accidental and the scheme of the two figures is merely an abbreviation made by the forger of more extensive Old Babylonian scenes.

²⁵ J. N. Strassmaier, *Inschriften von Cyrus . . .* (Leipzig, 1890), No. 325 is a text recording an agreement for apprenticeship for a period of five years of a slave. This slave belonging to Itti-Marduk-balātu was entrusted to Hašdaj who himself was a slave of Cambyses, crown prince at that time. Obviously, Hašdaj was a master seal cutter. I owe the following translation of this text to the generosity of A. L. Oppenheim:

Itti-Marduk-balātu, son of Nabû-aḥḥē-iddin of the family Egibi gave his slave Guzu-ina-Bēl-ašbat to Hašdaj, the *purkullu*, a slave of Cambyses, the crown prince, for five years, to (learn) the craft of the *purkullu*. x x x (the copy has *ardāni šā x* which is senseless in the context). He will teach him the entire craft of the *purkullu*. Itti-Marduk-balātu will clothe Guza-Bēl-ašbat with one (? correct senseless DI in line 9 into 1-it) *mušiptu*-garment. If Hašdaj does not teach him, he pays 20 minas of silver. After he has taught him for five years (restored from TuM 2-3 214: 8 f.) [his (the apprentice) wages will be . . .] (witnesses).

of bronze,²⁶ employed with an abrasive, like fine quartz sand, probably used with oil or water as a binder.²⁷ The modern forger lacks that training with efficient tools and we observe his resulting lack of control of his craft in the varying height of the figures and the incoherent composition caused by the way in which the single figures seem to project into the field instead of being contained within their own clear outlines, as in the genuine cylinders, Nos. 1 and 2. In No. 4 the figures are so deeply hollowed out of the cylinder and consequently stand out so highly that they crowd the field whereas in Nos. 3 and 5 the engraving is in part so shallow that there are no clear boundaries between figure and background. It is in comparing the spurious with the genuine cylinders that one appreciates the technical and artistic superiority of the ancient craftsman.

The ancient seal cutters had to reduce a scene to the minute size of a cylinder. In order to succeed, lines and shapes had to express much with very limited means. An example is the rendering of the seated figure, a personage of major importance in relation to the standing figures of the scene. In order to stress the solidity and dignity of this posture, the design of the body always includes a horizontal accent even if it is found only in the edge of the flounces of the figure's robe as in No. 1, where the outline of the body itself is somewhat rounded as is usual in cylinders of the Akkad period. One becomes aware of this in contrast to the seated figure of No. 3 (see Pl. V: 3) in which the forger was merely concerned with copying a seated personage, not with its meaning. For this reason his own figure, which lacks a horizontal accent, seems to slip down from the precariously narrow stool.

²⁶ Frankfort describing the working capital of a seal cutter listed: "some finished seals, some undecorated beads, a copper chisel, *two pointed instruments* of copper, and a whetstone pierced for suspension from the girdle" (the italics are mine), *Oriental Institute Communications*, No. 16 (1933), p. 47.

²⁷ This suggestion was made by Isabella Drew.

Moreover, the meaning of the entire scene, worship of an enthroned personage, is impaired by the forger's rendering of the two standing figures in almost naturalistic proportions, a treatment which places the head of the worshiper higher than that of the enthroned figure and that of the attendant on the same level. Comparison with the Old Babylonian cylinder, Pl. IV: F shows how subtly the head of the enthroned king is made to appear higher and larger than that of the surrounding figures. It is the round cap with its upturned brim which produces that effect, appearing to be more voluminous, more solid and therefore more impressive than the horned miter of the goddess.

Another feature which distinguishes scenes of genuine cylinders from the forgeries, Pl. I: 3-5, is the self-contained form of the figures. The unfinished cylinder, Pl. III: C, shows how these forms were hollowed out as coherent solid shapes to which the feet were added with sufficient distance from each other to form a visually satisfactory support. That this spread stance was a device to make the figures seem to stand solidly on the ground, can be seen in the short-kilted figure of Pl. IV: F, whose legs and feet describe with the ground line a tall but solidly based triangle. By contrast, the feet of the short-kilted figure in No. 3 are rather close together and the figure seems to sway backwards somewhat uncertainly while the worshiper with a kid seems to step forward in a posture which lacks the dignified calm of ancient Near Eastern persons, a calm which was perhaps expressive of their ideal of human behavior.

The large figures with lively movements which fill the field in an overall manner in No. 3, the uneven depth and scratchy engraving all resemble a spurious cylinder seal in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, recorded in 1952 by Buchanan together with several others of related style.²⁸ The fact that the forger felt free to add an attendant with a fan in No. 3

²⁸ *Ashmolean Museum*, 1095, 1096, 1097, 1108, 1109.

and to use only one pair of figures, bull-man and lion, in the Ashmolean cylinder just mentioned—using only half of the scene usually found in representations of the Akkad period—suggests that these seals were cut by a Near Eastern forger rather than by one working in Europe who would probably have kept more closely to illustrated prototypes. The same is probably true of No. 5, in which we have noted stylistic relations with No. 3. Proof that these stylistic criteria have led us to correct conclusions and that Nos. 3 and 5 were made by the same hand (despite the better workmanship of the smaller seal) can be found in the hook-like design below the feet of the sacrificial animal in No. 3. The same design, which is a misunderstood version of the ball-staff of Old Babylonian cylinders, is also found in some other examples of the Ashmolean group²⁹ of which one³⁰ has the shallow engraving of No. 5 as well as a very similar little figure of a bow-legged dwarf.

By today's standards of taste, with a preference by the public for clear, abstract designs, a cylinder like No. 3 could have been neither made nor bought; the same is true of No. 4, probably also of Near Eastern provenience for the same reasons given for No. 3. The naturalistic proportions of the figures in No. 3 are also more likely to reflect conventions generally observed several decades ago than in the last two decades. One would therefore assume these forgeries to have been made at the end of the last century or at the beginning of the present one.

²⁹ *Ashmolean Museum*, 1109.

³⁰ B. Buchanan kindly informed me that he recorded in 1952 twenty-five of the seals classified as doubtful or fakes which he had found in a drawer, unregistered, together with a number that were good. Nos. 1084, 1095 and 1096 belong to that "1952" group, but doubtless reached the Ashmolean Museum much earlier. Perhaps the fact that *Ashmolean Museum*, 1097 (which has the hook-like design of our group), was registered in 1909, gives us a better indication for the date of our group of forgeries.

The detailed discussion of these forged seals was presented for two reasons. First, that every object purporting to belong to the world of the ancient Near East adds something to the picture of the period in which it was made. Forgeries distort that picture and have to be rejected with a full statement of the reasons for such rejection. Second, by detailing the features which justify declaring Nos. 3-5 to be forgeries we hope to have given articulate expression to the evident superiority of the two small—and in the case of No. 1 even mediocre—works of ancient art.

Cylinder Seals at Andrews University

- No. 1. Hard black serpentine. Size: 33×20.2 (19) mm.³¹
 Impression of the cylinder seal, 1: 1 Plate I: 1
 Impression of the cylinder seal, *ca.* 1: $1\frac{1}{2}$ Plate II: 1
 Photograph of the cylinder seal, *ca.* 1: $2\frac{1}{2}$ Plate V: 1
- No. 2. Black serpentine. Size: 28×14.7 (14) mm.
 Impression of the cylinder seal, 1: 1 Plate I: 2
 Impression of the cylinder seal, *ca.* 1: $1\frac{1}{2}$ Plate II: 2
 Photograph of the cylinder seal, *ca.* 1: $2\frac{1}{2}$ Plate V: 2
- No. 3. White alabaster. Size: 38×21.5 mm.
 Impression of the cylinder seal, 1: 1 Plate I: 3
 Photograph of the cylinder seal, *ca.* 1: $2\frac{1}{2}$ Plate V: 3
 End of the cylinder, *ca.* 1: $2\frac{1}{2}$ Plate IV: E-2
- No. 4. Black serpentine. Size: 34.4×16 mm.
 Impression of the cylinder seal, 1: 1 Plate I: 4
- No. 5. Red steatite. Size: 29.2×12.8 mm.
 Impression of the cylinder seal, 1: 1 Plate I: 5
 Photograph of the cylinder seal, *ca.* 1: $2\frac{1}{2}$ Plate V: 5

³¹ The size is given in the following sequence: height and diameter, with a different diameter of the middle presented in parenthesis for Cylinders 1 and 2.