

# TWO STAMP SEALS FROM GIRDI QALA AND LOGARDAN

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## STAMP SEAL GQD.P1339.2 (FIG, 1)

### Typological description

The object GQD.P1339.2 is a hemispheroid and lenticular flat faced stamp seal made of malachite. It is around 2.3cm in diameter and 0.7cm thick. It presents a perforation of 0.3cm in diameter. It was found in Trench D of Girdi Qala North mound, during the 2017 campaign, on the floor 322 (*n° vert* 1339) of level 4A, middle Uruk in date. The technique of execution is crude and mixes cutting and gouging. The state of preservation is relatively good, except for a small blow on the reverse side.



**Fig. 1** - Malachite stamp seal from Girdi Qala North, level 4A, obverse and reverse sides (GQD.P1339.2).

### Stylistic and iconographic description

The style of the composition is naturalistic but without any detailed anatomic rendering ambition. Motifs are figurative and present two “*tête-bêche*” animals. It is a quadruped (maybe a doglike animal) and a reptilian figure with a gaping mouth (maybe a folded snake).

### Dating and discussion

The possible parallels with a stamp seal coming from TW 16-14 levels of Tell Brak<sup>1</sup> and with another stamp seal from the late chalcolithic levels of Tepe Giyan<sup>2</sup>, clearly attach GQD.P1339.2 to the LC3-4 glyptic tradition of Northern Mesopotamia. This dating is coherent with the context of the stamp seal. Indeed, level 4A of Girdi Qala North, as the whole Trench D sequence, is confidently dated to the Middle Uruk period based on the ceramic study<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, the composition of the motifs gives us a *terminal post quem*, since the “*tête-bêche*” disposition of the animals appears in the LC3 period<sup>4</sup>.

1. See fig. 4 pl. XX Mallowan 1947. This stamp seal was first assigned to the Djemdet Nasr period, but H. Pittman reassigned it to the LC3 period (Pittman 1999 p.48).
2. See fig. 228 p. 52 Rashad 1990, coming from late chalcolithic 3-4 levels (between c.3800-3300 BCE). We cannot have a clearer dating since the chronology of Tepe Giyan is heavily complex.
3. See Baldi, *supra*.
4. Pittman 2001 p. 416 et 424.

Nevertheless, many elements link this stamp seal to the earlier glyptic tradition of the Late Chalcolithic 2, between c.4200-3800 BCE. Indeed, during the V<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the IV<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE, a very specific glyptic develops in the Upper Tigris, across the entire piedmont arc. There we can see the development of a flourishing glyptic tradition shared by Tepe Gawra, Tepe Giyan, Niniveh, Arpachiyah and Değirmentepe<sup>5</sup>. The specificity of this glyptic remind the one from our stamp seal; motifs are mainly animal, the engraving is made with large tools and rather gouging than filling, style is schematic and tends to naturalism, and finally stamp seals are mainly hemispheroid. We can mention here some examples coming from Tepe Gawra XI, Xa<sup>6</sup> and VIII<sup>7</sup>, and from Arpachiyah<sup>8</sup> and Niniveh<sup>9</sup> for the so-called “Gawra period”, that can be compared with our stamp seal. However, it has to be emphasized that if characteristics are shared, each center retained its own peculiarities.

From the late LC2 and the beginning of the LC3, these productions showing ancient concepts persist and coexist with the new glyptic tradition coming from south Mesopotamia, the so-called Uruk one, characterized by the utilization of a drilling tool<sup>10</sup>. The presence of our stamp seal within an occupation identified as “colonial” illustrates a phase of intense contacts between southern Uruk urban centers and communities of the northern piedmonts<sup>11</sup>, attesting the cohabitation of both glyptic traditions during this period.

## STAMP SEAL LOGD.P379.1 (FIG. 2)

### Typological description

The object LOGD.P379.1 is a hemispheroid and circular flat faced stamp seal, made of steatite. It has a size of 2cm in diameter and 0.9cm thick. On the reverse side, we can observe a “diametrical strip” of 0.3cm width. This element is surprising and has no typological parallel. Thus, we can assume that we are dealing with a perforated stamp seal with a broken obverse side<sup>12</sup>. The perforation edges would have been polished in order to be in use or for esthetic purposes. The stamp



**Fig. 2** - Steatite stamp seal from Logardan D level 2, obverse and reverse sides (LOGD.P379.1).

5. Pittman 2001 pp. 412-414

6. See fig. 26 p. 278 Buchanan 1967 (stamp seal) and Taffeln 293 Von Wickede 1990 (sealing).

7. See fig. 180 pl. XIII Homès-Fredericq 1970 (sealing).

8. See Taffeln 404 Von Wickede 1990 (sealing).

9. See Abb. 37.1 p. 191 Von Wickede 1990 (sealing).

10. This technique of execution becomes a characteristic of the so-called Uruk glyptic, since the transition from the Late Ubaid to the Early Uruk period (Pittman 2001 p. 416 et 418).

11. Pittman 1999 p. 48.

12. Similar example in fig. 70 pl. V Buchanan and Moorey 1984.

seal was found in the Trench D of Logardan, into a brick of the oven 615 of level 2, dating to the Ur III period. As GQD.P1339.2, the technique of execution is crude with a rough cutting made by a small chisel. The state of preservation is bad, with concretions and a heavy erosion.

### Stylistic and iconographic description

The style is linear and rough, tending to schematism. It looks like an abstract motif that shows four vertical and parallel grooves drawn down from a horizontal one. However, it could be a schematic quadruped, based on the “*animaux-peigne*” model.

### Dating and discussion

A possible parallel with a sealing coming from Tepe Gawra XIII<sup>13</sup> allows us to define a dating around the middle of the V<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE. This is the so-called Ubaid 4 period, between 4900 and 4500 BCE. Others possible parallels can be mentioned, but without safe stratigraphic context: a package of stamp seals bought on near-eastern markets at the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> century and published by B. Buchanan and P. R. S. Moorey in 1984<sup>14</sup>. Another comparison is possible with a stamp seal discovered at Susa<sup>15</sup>. However, its discovery context is unclear since it is coming from old excavations. P. Amiet attached it to the so-called Susa I period, between 4200 and 3800 BCE.

The discovery context of our stamp seal within a so-called “Ur III” level is not a problem. Indeed, it is well known that stamp seals are often discovered into mudbricks and mudbrick joints<sup>16</sup>. People reused the earth-brick available on the spot for their constructions. Thus, they picked up artifacts, sherds, etc. An Ubaid occupation is attested at Logardan (in Trench C, cf. Vallet 2015) and explains the presence of our stamp seal in a late 3<sup>rd</sup> millenium mudbrick.

LOGD.P379.1 is fully integrated into the glyptic production of the Northern Mesopotamia regions in the middle of the V<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE. Indeed, it has the same general specificities: first typologically with its hemispheroid shape, then iconographically with the apparition of simple animal motif engraved in a linear style<sup>17</sup>, and finally with its technique of execution showing a heavy and schematic engraving.

## CONCLUSION

Both of these stamp seals are linked to the old glyptic tradition of the Northern Mesopotamia regions. During the V<sup>th</sup> and a large part of the IV<sup>th</sup> millennium BCE, we can see a real homogeneity and cohesion within the glyptic productions of the Upper Tigris. Our stamp seals illustrate the integration of Girdi Qala North and Logardan to this general panorama.

13. See fig. 134 pl. CLXVII Tobler 1950.

14. See fig. 60 et 61 pl. IV, fig. 62 to 64 pl. V and fig. 101 à 104 pl. VIII Buchanan and Moorey 1984.

15. See fig. 187 pl. 47 Amiet 1972.

16. Homès-Fredericq 1970 p. 3.

17. It has to be noted nevertheless that it could also be a purely geometric motif, legacy of the Hassuna and Halaf cultures (Buchanan and Moorey 1984 p. 5) that flourished in the same region (for the late Halaf levels of Logardan Trench C, Vallet 2015).

