

Personal Seal of King Ammurapi of Ugarit

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[The inscription on the cylinder seal impressed on RS 96.2042 identifies its owner as Ammurapi, the last king of Ugarit. The edition of this text provides welcome new information about the existence and use of royal personal seals in Late Bronze Age Ugarit.]

Keywords: Royal personal seal; Ammurapi king of Ugarit; the House of Urtenu.

RS 96.2042 is one of the four clay tags excavated by the *Mission archéologique syro-française de Ras Shamra-Ougarit* in the so-called House of Urtenu at Ugarit.¹ The tag has a triangular or cone-like shape presenting four flattened sides.² It is inscribed with a Ugaritic text on one of the broader sides (what could be called the “obverse” of the tag), written from base to apex, and bears the impression of a cylinder seal on the two smaller sides (the “top” and “bottom edges”) following the same orientation. The fourth, somewhat damaged surface (the “reverse”) is uninscribed and apparently without any impression. Judging from the available photographs, and like other examples of cone-like tags found at Ras Shamra, at the ends of the long axis of the flattened base and at the rounded apex are holes from which the strings that originally attached the tag to another object emerged. The size of the tag also agrees with other similar exemplars from Ugarit: the height from base to apex is 40 mm, the width of the base is 27 mm, and the average thickness is 20 mm.³

RS 96.2042 has been elegantly published by P. Bordreuil and D. Pardee.⁴ The authors have provided neat handcopies and excellent photographs of the inscription and seal impressions, as well as an edition of the Ugaritic text. G. del Olmo Lete has offered an alternative translation of the text in the preceding pages,

1. The other three, so far unpublished, “étiquettes” are RS 94.5012, RS 99.2019 and RS 2002.3000.20; see Fl. Malbran-Labat, “Catalogue raisonné des textes akkadiens de la “Maison d’Urtenu””, in C. Roche, ed., *D’Ougarit à Jérusalem. Recueil d’études épigraphiques et archéologiques offert à Pierre Bordreuil*, Paris 2008, p. 24.

2. It would thus belong to the “flattened, truncated cone”-type of tags, following W. van Soldt’s classification of the Ras Shamra labels; see his catalogue and study “Labels from Ugarit”, *UF* 21 (1989) pp. 375-388.

3. For a tag of similar shape and size, see e.g. RS 16.151, a photograph of which can be found in *PRU* 3, p. 188, pl. XIV fig. 17.

4. P. Bordreuil, D. Pardee, *Une Bibliothèque au Sud de la Ville ***. Textes 1994-2002 en cunéiforme alphabétique de la Maison d’Ourtenou* (RSOu XVIII), Lyon/Paris 2012, no. 82, pp. 209-210.

including a new set of photographs of all four sides of the tag kindly made available by the National Museum of Damascus. The present study is concerned with the seal impressions on RS 96.2042.

1. *The seal impressions on RS 96.2042*

As described by the editors of RS 96.2042, two of its sides have each an impression of one and the same seal originally carved in reverse with an Akkadian cuneiform inscription. The impressions on the two flat surfaces of the “top edge” and the “bottom edge” of the tag are oriented, as already stated, in the same way as the Ugaritic cuneiform text itself, that is, from base to apex. No attempt has been made to study or describe the impressions on RS 96.2042 or the cylinder seal that had been rolled twice on the tag and of which no other impressions are known so far in the corpus of Ras Shamra. On the basis of the excellent photographs provided by Bordreuil and Pardee but also their invaluable and careful “représentations approximatives”, new drawings have been made of both impressions (figs. 1 and 2) showing only minor differences from the ones published in the *editio princeps*.⁵ It goes without saying that the new delineations can only be as approximative as the editors’. On the other hand, not much of the stylistic detail of the impressions is left due to their worn surface; and the same holds true for part of the inscription.

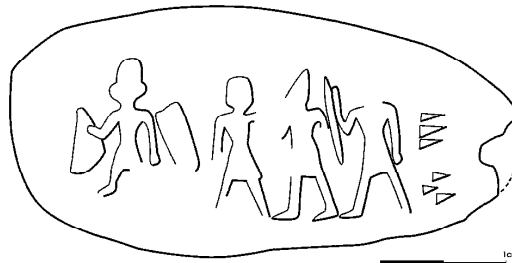


Fig. 1. Drawing of the seal impression on the “top edge” of RS 96.2042 (drawn by Ana García after the author’s sketch).

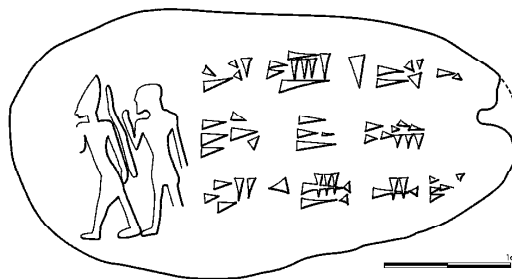


Fig. 2. Drawing of the seal impression on the “bottom edge” of RS 96.2042 (drawn by Ana García after the author’s sketch).

5. I am most grateful to Ana García who made drawings of all the seal impressions for the present publication. The drawings of the impressions of RS 96.2042 are made after the author’s sketches.

Although the cylinder seal was carefully rolled along both surfaces, the available space on the “edges” of the tag, indeed too short, did not allow to have the complete design of the seal impressed on the clay. However, whether intended or not, the two impressions show different sections of the scene partially overlapping each other, so that the design can be reconstructed almost to its original length and form (see fig. 3). Because traces of the edges or the caps of the cylinder seal have been preserved in the impression, especially the one on the “bottom edge” of the tag, it is possible to determine the approximate height of the seal, namely 16.6 mm. The cylinder seal must have been rather large, measuring about 18 mm in diameter.

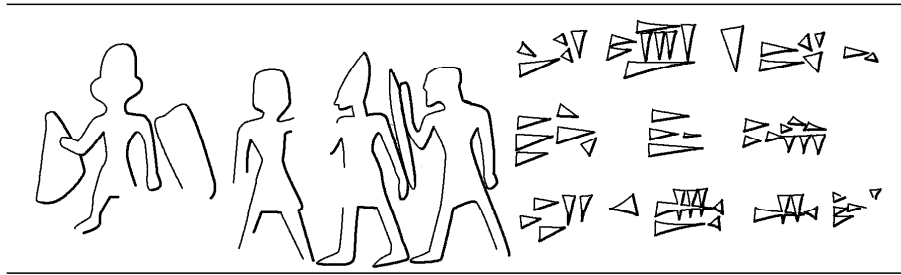


Fig. 3. Drawing of the cylinder seal design reconstructed from the two impressions of RS 96.2042 (drawn by Ana García after the author's sketch). Length: 56.6 mm; height: 16.6 mm.

The cylinder seal design depicts four standing figures. All of them, in a kilt, seem to be male. The last one wears a tall rounded headdress and holds a bow in his right hand (perhaps a shield is depicted behind him); the second figure, facing left, wears a pointed headdress, and the first one, also facing left, seems to hold a staff or similar object in his right raised hand. The composition is typical of the Syro-Hittite style.⁶ To the right of the scene and covering almost half of the seal's surface is a three-line, unframed Akkadian cuneiform inscription written horizontally, viz. perpendicularly to the seal axis. The inscription, almost fully preserved in the seal impression on the “bottom edge”, identifies the owner of the cylinder seal as Ammurapi, king of Ugarit. It reads:

^{na4}kišib ^pam-m[u]/-ra[p]-i' lugal / ^{uru}u-ga-r[i]-i[t] “Seal of Ammurapi king of Ugarit”

The king's name is clumsily written in two lines. The palaeography and orthography of the inscription follow the norm of the Late Bronze Age scribes of Ugarit. The king's name is spelled in the same way for example in the lists of the divinized kings of Ugarit, RS 88.2012:14 and RS 94.2518:14.⁷

6. See now D. Beyer, *Emar IV. Les sceaux* (OBO Series Archaeologica 20), Fribourg/Göttingen 2001, pp. 19-111 (Chapter I Group A).

7. See D. Arnaud, “Prolégomènes à la rédaction d'une histoire d'Ougarit II: les bordereaux de rois divinisés”, *SMEA* 41 (1999) 154-155. For other spellings of the king's name and the onomastic element =rāpi', see the author's *The Royal Deeds of Ugarit* (AOAT 335), Münster 2006, p. 62 n. 48; and also Arnaud, “Prolégomènes”, p. 159. Other attestations of the king's name in texts from the House of Urtenu await for publication. For the different attested spellings of the toponym “Ugarit”, see W. van Soldt, *The Topography of the City-State of Ugarit* (AOAT 324), Münster 2005, p. 7, and the author's *The Royal Deeds of Ugarit* (AOAT 335), Münster 2006, p. 263.

2. King Ammurapi's personal seal and the seals of the kings of Ugarit

It is well known that the seal used as a rule by the Ugarit royal palace administration in the roughly two centuries before the end of the kingdom around 1185 BC was the so-called “dynastic seal”, a cylinder seal originally carved in Babylonia in the 19th century BC that made its way to Ugarit where Yaqaru, who ruled the kingdom in the 15th century BC, had it recut with his name. Impressions of this seal or the replica that was made some years later (figs. 4 and 5) appear regularly and consistently on the royal documents that have survived in Ras Shamra of the seven successive kings from Niqmaddu II down to Ammurapi, the last ruler of Ugarit.⁸ Some of these kings, however, also had their own personal seals and used them too, if only occasionally, to sign documents or other administrative artefacts such as clay tags.⁹ Niqmaddu, presumably II, and Ammishtamru II had each a signet ring carved with their names, and Ibiranu seems to also have had a personal seal, namely a cylinder of which only a fragmentary, faint impression exists.¹⁰ The impressions on RS 96.2042 provide the evidence that Ammurapi owned too a personal cylinder seal carved with his name. Whether or not he owned a second one, namely a signet ring inscribed with his name that was reportedly found at Ras Shamra and has remained unpublished and untraced, must necessarily be left open for the time being.¹¹ None of the royal seals known from their impressions have survived or come to light so far.

Whereas the signet ring of Ammishtamru II (fig. 7) bore an inscription (reversed) in alphabetic cuneiform, Niqmaddu's signet ring (fig. 6) and Ammurapi's cylinder seal (Figure 8) had their inscriptions (properly carved in intaglio) in Akkadian. The arrangement of the inscription on these seals differs in each case. Ammishtamru II's seal is carved exclusively with the Ugaritic three-line inscription (*mišmn / mydmtmr / mlk ugrt*) with no space left for a design. The signs of Niqmaddu's seal two-line inscription ([^{na4}]kišib ^pniq-ma-^diškur' / [luga]l ^{uru}u-ga-ri-it) are interspersed among the figures depicted in the scene, namely a man in kneeling position spearing a lion to his right.¹² And the text inscribed on Ammurapi's seal, although not enclosed in a frame, is arranged in three parallel lines, as already mentioned. All three inscriptions have in common the text itself: “Seal of RN king of Ugarit”.¹³ The two Akkadian inscriptions, Niqmaddu's and Ammurapi's, also share the palaeography and the orthography.

As regards the use of their personal seals, Ammishtamru II stamped his signet ring at least on two occasions: on one of the Akkadian documents concerning his divorce from the daughter of the king of Amurru (RS 16.270) and on a bulla found at Ras Ibn Hani (RIH 83/21). The bulla, recovered in a fragmentary state, bears three seal impressions, and the tablet has two of them, one beside the other and just above the impression of the dynastic seal.¹⁴ The impression of Niqmaddu's signet ring is attested also

8. For a description and interpretation of the dynastic seal(s) of Ugarit, see *The Royal Deeds of Ugarit*, pp. 184-199. Ammurapi rolled or had one of his notaries roll the (original) dynastic seal on the only deed that can be assigned to him, namely RS 17.322 (see *The Royal Deeds of Ugarit*, pp. 62, 185-186 with note 28).

9. For a description of the personal seals of the kings of Ugarit, see *The Royal Deeds of Ugarit*, pp. 194-197.

10. On the fragment RS 18.280. No drawing or photograph of the impression is published.

11. See *The Royal Deeds of Ugarit*, p. 197 n. 69.

12. The design and the ring itself have been recently described as belonging to the Syro-Hittite style; see D. Beyer, *Emar IV. Les sceaux*, pp. 112-113.

13. They also have in common the orientation, although this is hardly a relevant feature given the fact that two of them are signet rings.

14. See *The Royal Deeds of Ugarit*, p. 195. Beautiful photographs and handcopies of these impressions are published by D. Pardee, “Ugaritic Alphabetic Cuneiform in the Context of Other Alphabetic Systems”, in C.L. Miller, ed., *Studies in Semitic and Afroasiatic Linguistics Presented to Gene B. Gragg* (SAOC 60), Chicago 2007, pp. 194-195 figs. 12.9 and 12.10. More recently, A. Bounni, E. Lagarce and J. Lagarce (“La tablette RIH 78/12 et le sceau nominal de ‘Ammishtamrou’”, in C. Roche, ed., *D'Ougarit à Jérusalem. Recueil d'études épigraphiques et archéologiques offert à Pierre Bordreuil*, Paris 2008, pp. 153-158)

on two documents, namely two royal deeds: RS 16.191+ written in Ugaritic and describing the redemption of a number of people from the land of Beirut, and RS 17.147 recording a grant of Ammishtamru II.¹⁵ In the latter case, either Ammishtamru II stamped his grandfather's signet ring instead of rolling the "normative" dynastic seal, or the seal belonged to Niqmaddu III who ratified his grandfather Ammishtamru II's grant with his personal signet ring.¹⁶ Because RS 16.191+ has possibly been written in the days of Ammishtamru II,¹⁷ the former, generally assumed, explanation seems more likely. Ammurapi's personal cylinder seal is so far only attested on the tag discovered in the House of Urtenu. Although the double impression of Ammishtamru II's personal seal in the divorce document RS 16.270 just above the dynastic seal impression would point to the king's assuming personal responsibility, a royal deed such as RS 17.147 bearing Niqmaddu's personal seal impressions instead of the "normative" dynastic seal would question the strictly personal function and practice of this kind of seal.¹⁸

3. *A concluding note on the tag RS 96.2042 and the House of Urtenu*

The discovery of a tag bearing king Ammurapi's personal seal impression in the House of Urtenu hardly needs a discussion. In the light of the documentation that has been found, especially the state letters, and not unlike other private houses in the city of Ugarit (for example, Rapanu's), Urtenu's house can be regarded as an extension of the royal palace administration. Chronologically speaking, on the other hand, the texts indicate that this scriptorium of the state bureaucracy was active during the reigns of the last two kings of Ugarit, Niqmaddu III and Ammurapi.¹⁹ The other person involved in the transaction is Yabninu (the probable vocalisation of *ybn*) to whom the container, to which the cone-like tag was probably fastened,²⁰ was delivered or entrusted according to the text inscribed on the "obverse" of RS 96.2042. Whether or not he is the homonymous high royal official who is supposed to have inhabited the so-called "Southern Palace" of Ugarit cannot be proven. The fact, however, that he appears together with the king as a party to the transaction recorded in RS 96.2042 would favour his identification with the well-known chief-administrator (*šatammu rabû*) of the kingdom. Of interest too is the letter RS 88.2009 discovered in the House of Urtenu and dated to the last days of Ugarit.²¹ The message, promising the dispatch of rescue forces from Carchemish, is addressed to Urtenu and Yabninu as well as to the great ones and the elders of Ugarit.

have suggested that the fragmentary, faint seal impression on the Ugaritic letter RIH 78/12 was made with Ammishtamru II's signet ring.

15. See *The Royal Deeds of Ugarit*, p. 196.

16. This is the alternative proposed by I. Singer, "A Political History of Ugarit", in W.G.E. Watson and N. Wyatt, eds., *Handbook of Ugaritic Studies*, Leiden, Boston, Köln 1999, p. 693.

17. See *The Royal Deeds of Ugarit*, p. 266. Note, on the other hand, that the Ugaritic script was invented after Niqmaddu II, as is now generally assumed (see the most recent discussion in D. Pardee, "RS 15.117 et l'origine de l'alphabet cunéiforme d'Ougarit: rapport de collation", *Orientalia* NS 79 (2010) 55-73).

18. See *The Royal Deeds of Ugarit*, p. 197.

19. See Fl. Malbran-Labat, "Catalogue raisonné des textes akkadiens de la "Maison d'Urtenu"", pp. 21-38.

20. Following the practice in Ugarit; see van Soldt, "Labels from Ugarit", pp. 387-388.

21. The letter was published by Fl. Malbran-Labat in M. Yon, D. Arnaud, eds., *Etudes ougaritiques. I. Travaux 1985-1995* (RSOu XIV), Paris 2001, pp. 249-250, 253.

The corpus of the seals of the kings of Ugarit (scale 1:1)

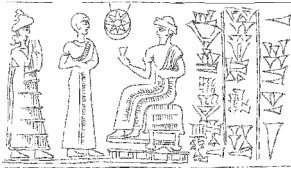


Fig. 4. Drawing of the impression of the original dynastic seal (drawn by Ana García after W. Forrer, *Ugaritica* 3, p. 73 fig. 96).

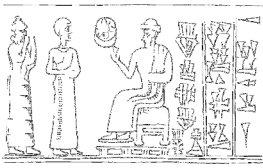


Fig. 5. Drawing of the impression of the replica of the dynastic seal (drawn by Ana García after W. Forrer, *Ugaritica* 3, p. 73 fig. 96).



Fig. 6. Drawing of the impression of the signet ring of Niqmaddu, presumably II (drawn by Ana García after W. Forrer, *Ugaritica* 3, p. 78 fig. 100).



Fig. 7. Drawing of the impression of the signet ring of Ammishtamru II (drawn by Ana García after W. Forrer, *Ugaritica* 3, p. 81 fig. 103).



Fig. 8. Drawing of the impression of the cylinder seal of Ammurapi (drawn by Ana García after the author's sketch).