

Three Hittite Inscribed Artifacts from Erimtan Museum

Erimtan Müzesi'nden Üç Hitit Yazıtlı Eser

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Abstract

This study presents the first scholarly edition of three inscribed artifacts from Hittite Anatolia, currently preserved in the Erimtan Museum in Ankara. The artifacts under examination consist of a seal, a seal impression, and a fragmentary cuneiform tablet. RTI (Reflectance Transformation Imaging) studies have been conducted to obtain clear images of the inscriptions on the artifacts, and their drawings have been completed for publication. A proposed reading of the seal owner's name is provided for both the seal and the seal impression, offering insight into the individuals associated with these objects. These identifications contribute to the broader study of glyptic in the Hittite period. In addition, the preliminary reading of the tablet fragment, despite its heavily eroded state, suggests a possible association with the corpus of the AN.TAH. ŠUM festival. While this identification remains tentative due to the fragmentary nature of the text, it offers an opportunity to investigate potential connections between this document and Hittite religious texts. The analysis of these three artifacts not only expands the extant corpus of Hittite inscriptions but also renders these artifacts

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accessible to all through their publication. This study exemplifies the significance of examining artifacts from private museums. Systematic documentation of these artifacts can yield valuable data for refining scholarly reconstructions of Hittite history and culture. Further research may elucidate the historical and philological significance of these artifacts using a comparative analysis with securely provenanced materials.

Keywords: Hittite Anatolia, glyptic, hieroglyphic writing, Hittite cuneiform writing, Hittite religion.

Öz

Bu çalışma, günümüzde Ankara, Erimtan Müzesi'nde muhafaza edilen, Hitit Anadolu'suna ait üç yazıtlı eserin ilk akademik değerlendirmesini sunmaktadır. İncelenen eserler, bir mühür, bir mühür baskısı ve kırk bir çivi yazılı tabletten oluşmaktadır. Mühür, mühür baskısı ve tablet üzerinde yer alan okumaların net görüntüleri için RTI (Yansıtma Dönüştürme Görüntüleme) çalışmaları yapılmış ve eserlerin okunmasının ardından, ilk kez yayınlanmak üzere çizimleri tamamlanmıştır. Hem mühür hem de mühür baskısı için mühür sahibinin adının okunmasına yönelik bir öneri sunulmuş olup, bu kimliklendirme, söz konusu nesnelerle ilişkilendirilen bireyler hakkında önemli bilgiler sağlamaktadır. Bu tespitlerin, Hitit Dönemi mühürcülüğü üzerine yapılan daha geniş kapsamlı çalışmalara katkıda bulunması beklenmektedir. Ayrıca, ağır tahribata uğramış durumda olan tablet fragmanına yönelik ön okuma, metnin AN.TAH.ŞUM festivali ile olası bir ilişkisini düşündürmektedir. Metnin kırk yapısı nedeniyle bu kimliklendirme kesin olmamakla birlikte, belge Hitit dinî metinleri ile olası bağlantıları araştırma fırsatı sunmaktadır. Bu üç eserin analizi, mevcut Hitit yazıtlarını genişletmekle kalmayıp, aynı zamanda bu eserleri bilim dünyasına da açık hâle getirmektedir. Çalışma, özel müzelerde bulunan eserlerin sistematik olarak belgelenmesinin önemini de vurgulamaktadır. Bu tür eserlerin titizlikle incelenmesi, Hitit tarihi ve kültürüne dair yeni yapılandırmaları daha da kesinleştirecek değerli veriler sağlayacaktır. Gelecekte yapılacak olan mühür, mühür baskısı ve tablet üzerindeki yazılara dayalı karşılaştırmalı analizler ve disiplinlerarası çalışmalar, bu eserlerin tarihsel ve filolojik önemini daha iyi aydınlatacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hitit Anadolu, mühürcülük, hieroglif yazı, Hitit çivi yazısı, Hitit dini.

Introduction

In 2015, Erimtan Museum was opened in Ankara with the permission of the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism. It is one of the first private museums in Ankara, displaying about 2000 Anatolian archaeological artifacts ranging from the IIIrd millennium BC to the Byzantine period.

In 2021, Yiğit H. Erbil was contacted by the director of the Erimtan Museum, Nazan Gezer, who was planning to compile a comprehensive catalog of the museum's collection. She entrusted him with protohistoric archaeological artifacts, including pottery, metal objects, and other types of materials.

Among this corpus of artifacts, three objects were inscribed with Anatolian script. The first two objects were a seal and a seal impression, both inscribed with Anatolian hieroglyphs. The third inscribed object was a fragment of a Hittite cuneiform tablet.

In the same year, Yiğit H. Erbil invited Alice Mouton to participate in the publication of these three inscribed artifacts. The Erimtan Museum allowed the present authors to study and publish all three objects separately.

Both authors would like to thank Nazan Gezer for her trust in them, as well as Selma Ünal-Çakmak for facilitating the access to the objects, and Levent Koçak and Tolga Kıyak for assisting them in photographing, creating RTI images, and drawings of these objects. On these drawings, Alice Mouton drew the writings of all three objects. Beyond the epigraphic readings, the physical characteristics of the seal (fig. 1), including its perforation, wear traces, carving organization, and sealing practice will be examined.

I. Hittite Seal



Fig. 1a: Seal no. 644

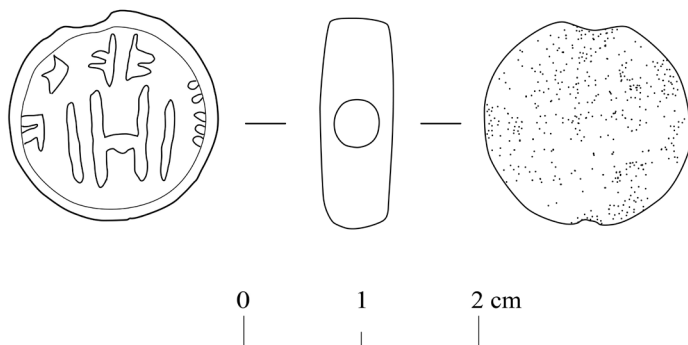


Fig. 1b: Drawing of seal no. 644

This biconvex seal made of stone was included into the collection in 1992 and was inventoried under the number 644. It is a circular seal whose dimensions are 1.8 cm x 1.7 cm. It is perforated all the way in the middle of its sides, so that it could be held with a string. Hittite seals perforated in the same way are also attested elsewhere. See for example seal GA 3 in Dinçol and Dinçol 1986 which shows asymmetrical iconography like our seal. However, only one surface of our seal is carved, unlike the GA 3 seal which is carved on both surfaces.

The carved surface of our seal is inscribed with Anatolian hieroglyphs. The upper sign, located in the center of the surface is composed of two vertical lines each flanked by two short horizontal lines on the outer side. The shape of this sign is reminiscent of the one on no. 3.2a of Tav. 18 in Mora 1987. It is read “Ja/I³” by Mora¹. Indeed, our first sign could very well be *209 currently read i(a), since a very similar shape of this sign also appears as no. 10a of Tav. X in Poetto 1981².

The sign that appears under the sign *209 on the seal has the structure of a capital H letter. Several graphic parallels of this sign which is to be read as PORTA₂ (*239) can be observed, for example nos. 637b and 638b of Taf. 50 in Herbordt 2005. The latter bear the inscription PORTA₂-MI-ti, which Hawkins reads as Astummanti³. However, another possible reading of PORTA₂-MI-ti is Hilamati, as suggested by Dinçol and Dinçol 2008, 40. Sealing no. 154 of Taf. 14 in Dinçol and Dinçol 2008 shows another good graphic parallel to our PORTA₂ sign, where the name PORTA₂-MI-ti is accompanied by the title URCEUS (*345).

For the phonetic reading of PORTA₂ as *HILA*, see Dinçol (1990, 153) who compares his reading Hilamati with cuneiform Himaladdu⁴. Also graphically close to our PORTA₂ sign is that of the Lions' Gate of Hattuša, with a small graphic variation⁵. In this case the name of our seal could be read as i(a)-hila possibly with the middle part omitted.

- 1 Clelia Mora, *La glittica anatolica del II millennio A.C.: Classificazione tipologica*, Studia Mediterranea 6, Pavia 1987, p. 95 sub. 3.2. The abbreviations used here come from Hans Gustav Güterbock, Harry A. Hoffner and Theo van den Hout (eds.), *The Hittite Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (= CHD), L-N, Chicago 1989, pp. xxi-xxix; CHD P, Chicago 1997, pp. vii-xxvi; CHD Š, Chicago 2002, pp. vi-viii. TLH^{dig} = Thesaurus Linguarum Hethaeorum digitalis (<https://www.hethport.uni-wuerzburg.de/TLHdig/>).
- 2 See Massimo Poetto, *La collezione anatolica di E. Borowski. Sigilli e iscrizioni in luvio geroglifico*, Studia Mediterranea 3, Pavia 1981, p. 20 who also reads this sign i(a).
- 3 Apud Susanne Herbordt, *Die Prinzen- und Beamtensiegel der Hethitischen Grossreichszeit auf Tonbullen aus dem Nişantepe-Archiv in Hattusa*, Boğazköy-Hattuša 19, Mainz am Rhein 2005, p. 226.
- 4 See also Ali Dinçol, “Neue hethitische Hieroglyphensiegel in den staatlichen Museen zu Istanbul, Ereğli, Karaman und im privaten Sadberk-Hanim-Museum”, *Orientalia*, Nova Series 59, 1990, Tab. IX, no. 6.
- 5 Massimiliano Marazzi, “Die sogenannten ‘eingepunzten’ Hieroglypheninschriften von Boğazköy: Status quaestionis”, in *Audias fabulas veteres. Anatolian Studies in Honor of Jana Součková-Siegelová*, ed. Šarka Velhartická, Culture and History of the Ancient Near East 79, Leiden-Boston 2016, p. 197 Abb. 4. See last Massimiliano Marazzi, “Hittite lulu-: status gratiae?”, in *Orizzonti d'Oriente. Tra Mediterraneo e Asia centrale. Studi in ricordo di Sebastiano Tusa*, eds. Stefano de Martino-Massimiliano Marazzi-Lucio Milano, Eothen 25. Firenze 2022, p. 121 and 125, fig. 2b, where the author detects 4 vertical lines above and below the PORTA₂ sign, which he logically reads -MI.

There is a vertical bar on each side of the PORTA₂ sign. Since this vertical bar appears twice, it cannot belong to the name of the seal owner, which appears only once in the center of the seal. Therefore, there is a possibility that this vertical bar represents the VIR₂ sign in a simplified way. For parallels, see: 1) a seal from Adana⁶; 2) a seal impression on a jar fragment from Dağlıbaz Höyük⁷.

For the possibility of displaying a VIR₂ sign without the usual BONUS₂ sign on top, see e.g. a seal from Istanbul⁸.

We also observe two small elements on the right side of the impression of the seal. These two elements do not seem to belong to the name of the owner of the seal, since they are not aligned with the i(a) and PORTA₂ signs that form the name.

Furthermore, since they occur only once, they do not appear to designate a title, unlike the simplified VIR₂ sign described above.

Therefore, we believe that these two elements could be fillers. For analogous motifs, see for example, seals no. 167 and 168 from Hattuša⁹ and, even more accurately, the seal fig. 2.3b from Gaziantep Museum, where both fillers also appear¹⁰.

On the opposite side of the surface of our seal, five dots form a line. This is probably also a filling motif. For a close parallel, see the seal no. 2 preserved in Jerusalem and published by I. Singer¹¹.

6 Ali Dinçol-Belkis Dinçol, “Unpublished Hittite Hieroglyphic Seals in the Regional Museum of Adana”, *Hethitica*, 8, 1987, p. 88 Pl. II.

7 Natalia Bolatti-Guzzo-Massimo Poetto, “A revision of the Anatolian Hieroglyphic Seal Impression from Dağlıbaz Höyük (bay of İskenderun)”, in *Orizzonti d'Oriente. Tra Mediterraneo e Asia centrale. Studi in ricordo di Sebastiano Tusa*, ed. Stefano de Martino-Massimiliano Marazzi-Lucio Milano, Eothen 25, Firenze 2022, p. 29, Pl. I no. Ib. For the reading of the sign, see their p. 27.

8 Mora, *La glittica anatolica...*, 1987, Tav. 39 Gruppo VI (b) no. 1.20a on the left side of the seal.

9 Ali Dinçol-Belkis Dinçol, *Die Prinzen- und Beamtsiegel aus der Oberstadt von Boğazköy-Hattuša vom 16. Jahrhundert bis zum Ende der Grossreichszeit*, Boğazköy-Hattuša 22, Mainz am Rhein 2008, Taf. 16 no. 167 and 168.

10 Massimo Poetto, “A Fresh Look at Recently Published Anatolia Hieroglyphic Seals 2”, in *Between Philology and Archaeology. Studies on Ancient Anatolia and the Near East Offered to Massimiliano Marazzi*, ed. Natalia Bolatti Guzzo-Rita Francia, Combis 2024, p. 240.

11 Itamar Singer, “Three Hittite Seals”, *Tel Aviv*, 7, 1980, p. 170, fig. 2A.

Similar filling motifs consisting of short lines can also be seen on seal GA 3B from the Gaziantep Museum¹² and on seal impression no. 297 from Hattuša¹³.

II. Hittite Seal Impression



Fig. 2a: Seal impression no. 915

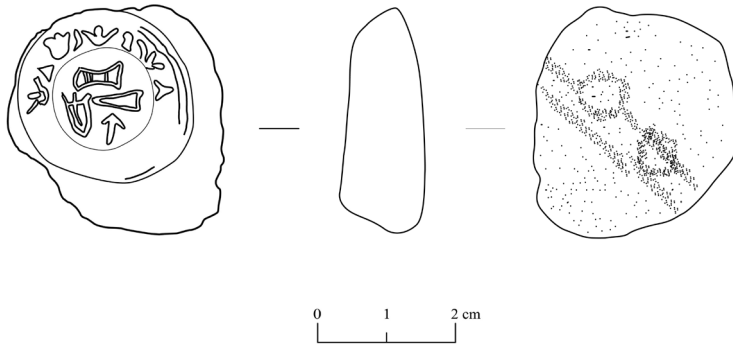


Fig. 2b: Drawing of seal impression no. 915

¹² Ali Dinçol-Belkis Dinçol, "Hethitische Hieroglyphensiegel in den Museen zu Samsun, Gaziantep und Kahramanmaraş", *Anadolu Araştırmaları*, 10, 1986, Taf. V.

¹³ Dinçol-Dinçol, *Die Prinzen- und Beamtensiegel...*, 2008, Taf. 28.

This seal impression on a bulla was included into the collection in 1996 and was inventoried under the number 915. According to the impression, the dimensions of this seal were 3 cm x 2 cm. Evidence of a string and two rounded traces is present on the rear of the bulla, suggesting that it may have been placed on an uneven surface.

The seal was composed of an outer ring which was filled with decorative motifs, namely an alternation of triangles and vegetal motifs, and a central ring inscribed with hieroglyphic writing. The same organization in two concentric circles with almost identical vegetal motifs and triangles on the outer rim can be seen on a seal from Adana¹⁴. Clelia Mora dates this parallel seal to the 2nd half of the XVth century BC¹⁵.

Another parallel seal with analogous vegetal motifs and triangles on the outer rim is found as no. 57 in SBo II¹⁶.

In the central ring of the seal impression, four hieroglyphic signs are visible, although one of them is barely visible.

At the top of the inscription, a PURUS sign (*322) is clearly visible. This should be the beginning of the seal owner's name.

Below this, and slightly to the right, is a VIR sign (*313).

Below the *313 sign, traces of a third sign are visible, though barely.

Below the PURUS sign, but slightly to the left of it, is a fourth sign. Since this sign is not lined up with the three others that we have just mentioned, we believe that it should indicate the title of the owner. This sign could be AURIGA (*289). For graphic parallels, see seal impressions no. 80 of BoHa 19¹⁷ and 6A of Lev. VI of Dinçol and Dinçol 1980. Even closer parallels are seal impressions no. 201 and 234 of BoHa 19¹⁸.

¹⁴ Mora, *La glittica anatolica...*, 1987, Tav. 14 no. 3.3a.

¹⁵ Mora, *La glittica anatolica...*, 1987, 89.

¹⁶ Hans Gustav Güterbock, *Siegel aus Boğazköy. Zweiter Teil: Die Königssiegel von 1939 und die übrigen Hieroglyphensiegel*, Archiv für Orientforschung Beiheft 7, Berlin 1942, p. 68 no. 57.

¹⁷ Herbordt, *Die Prinzen- und Beamteniegel...*, 2005, Taf. 6.

¹⁸ Herbordt, *Die Prinzen- und Beamteniegel...*, 2005, Taf. 16 and 19.

In the search for parallel names, we found the reading PURUS.VIR^{zi} attested on a signet from Ugarit¹⁹. The most likely phonetic reading of this logographic group is Kummaya-ziti, as already suggested by Emmanuel Laroche²⁰.

The name PURUS.VIR^{zi} is also attested for a scribe on two seal impressions from Hattuša²¹. Ali and Belkis Dinçol read it as Kum(m)iya-ziti²². Mora also found PURUS.VIR on two seal impressions from Nişantepe; one of them has the title MAGNUS.DOMINUS²³.

Because to these parallels, we propose to identify the erased sign of our seal impression, namely the sign that appears under the VIR sign as zi/a (*376). If we look closely at the seal impression, we can indeed see traces of this arrow-like sign.

III. Hittite Tablet Fragment

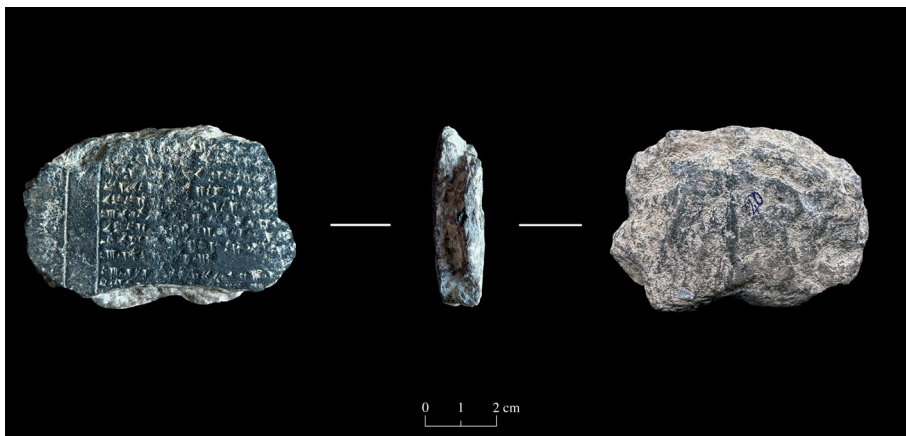


Fig. 3a: Tablet fragment no. 916

- 19 Mora, *La glittica anatolica...*, 1987, Tav. 69, no. 1.2.
- 20 Emmanuel Laroche, *Les noms des Hittites*, Etudes linguistiques 4, Paris 1966, no. 621; the phonetic reading kummaya-ziti is attested in cuneiform tablets.
- 21 Dinçol-Dinçol, *Die Prinzen- und Beamtensiegel...*, 2008, Taf. 14 no. 141 and Taf. 26 no. 271.
- 22 Dinçol-Dinçol, *Die Prinzen- und Beamtensiegel...*, 2008, p. 75.
- 23 Clelia Mora, "Seals and Sealings of Karkamiš, Part III", in *Ipamati kistamati pari tumatimis: Luwian and Hittite studies presented to J. David Hawkins on the occasion of his 70th birthday*, ed. Itamar Singer, Tell Aviv 2010, p. 175; she refers to no. 174 and 175 of Herbordt, *Die Prinzen- und Beamtensiegel...*, 2005.

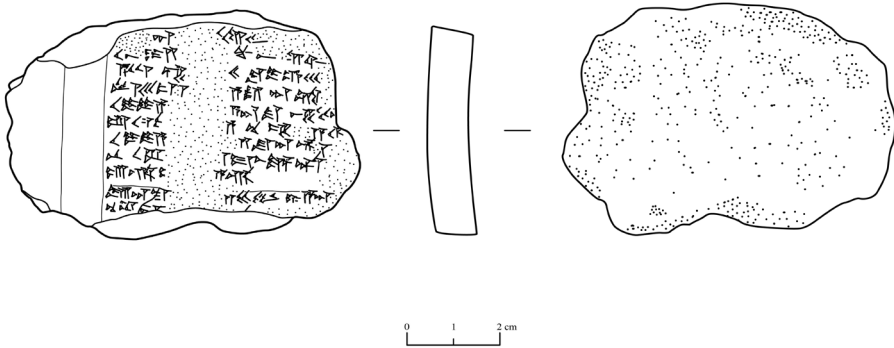


Fig. 3b: Drawing of tablet fragment no. 916



Please scan to examine the figures in detail.

This badly burnt tablet fragment was inventoried under the number 916. It measures 7.8 cm x 4 cm and is approximately 1.5 cm thick. Only one surface is preserved, which shows a 1 cm wide intercolumnar space. Only the right column has some preserved cuneiform signs. What is preserved of the left column is almost completely blank, with some unreadable traces of signs going upward.

Since the written surface is flatter than the unwritten surface, this written surface is probably the obverse of the tablet. It shows 11 preserved lines, which are worn away both in the middle and on the right edge. The tablet fragment was not cleaned. From the few well-preserved cuneiform signs we can see, the tablet seems to date from the New Script period (XIIIth century BC).

In order to better see the damaged signs, we used RTI (Reflectance Transformation Imaging) images prepared by Yiğit H. Erbil and Levent Koçak; these images revealed some of the eroded signs.

While preparing the edition of this tablet fragment, Alice Mouton discovered a term that she suspected to be Hurrian. Therefore, the two co-authors of this article decided to ask Stefano de Martino for his expertise in the Hurrian language. They are very grateful to him for his valuable help. Alice Mouton drafted the entire

transliteration while Stefano de Martino provided some insights into Hurrian terms. Later on, Susanne Görke and Sebastian Fischer were both consulted for second and third opinions about these Hurrian terms. They should also be warmly thanked for their support.

Due to the very eroded state of the tablet fragment, the reading of the preserved part remains very tentative.

Erimtan Museum no. 916 obv. r. col.

1' x-an x x-li-in x [...]

2' u-i-ya x x nu x-iš-ši(-)[...]

3' A-NA EN ÉRIN²MEŠ ku-i-e-eš x [...]

4' LÚ.MEŠ Ú-BA-RÚ a-ra-an-ta-r[i ...]

5' u-i-ya x x-ya-an-ma EN pu-[...]

6' Ú-UL x-x A NU.GÁL² nu a-ši(-)[...]

7' u-i-ya a-ri-iš-šu-an x x [...]

8' BE-EL x-an-li-ma-aš-ša^(over eras.)-an-da [...]

9' ú-ri-ya ʾni²¹-ha-ri-[ya ...]

10' ma-a-an-ma IGI²-zi-in UN-an [...]

11' nu-uš-ma-[aš ...]

In lines 2', 5' and 7', the first sign sequence is u-i-ya, which is described as “Hattischer Zuruf” in TLH^{dig}. A close sequence of signs appears in KUB 36.89 obv. 10 in the Hattian sentence: ú-i ú-i pu-ru-ša-el pu-ru-ša-el, which Oğuz Soysal translates as “You, you, Lord of the land, Lord of the land”,²⁴ so that u-i-ya could theoretically include the Hattian pronoun of the 2nd pers. sg. The sequence u-i-ya differs significantly from [...](-)ú-wi₃-ya, which appears on KBo 11.7 obv. 15' as a Hurrian term²⁵. The latter is preceded by traces of at least one sign consisting of

24 Oğuz Soysal, “Einige vermisste, übersehene oder verkannte hattische Fragmente”, in *Anatolica Antica. Studi in memoria di Fiorella Imparati, vol. II*, eds. Stefano de Martino-Franca Pecchioli Daddi, Eothen 11, Firenze 2002, p. 780 fn. 38.

25 We are very thankful toward Stefano de Martino for providing us with this reference during our Zoom meeting on October 21, 2024.

a high wedge and a vertical element. Yet another interpretation would be to see in u-i-ya the 2nd pers. sg. of the imperative form of the Hittite verb *uiya-* “to send”. However, the combination of such an imperative form with descriptive verbs such as *a-ra-an-ta-r[i]* “they stand”, which appears in line 4', is quite unexpected. Therefore, we prefer the Hattian interpretation of the sequence u-i-ya in our text.

In line 4', ^{LÚ.MEŠ}Ú-BA-RÙ *a-ra-an-ta-r[i]* “The foreigners stand” reminds us of the corpus of the cultic festival texts, and more specifically of the AN.TAH.ŠUM festival, where the same sentence occurs at least once in KUB 2.5+ vi 17-18 (CTH 612: ^{LÚ.MEŠ}Ú-BA-RÙ-TIM *a-ra-an-ta-ri*).

In line 9', the first sign sequence reads ú-ri-ya, which is a Hurrian term often associated with ni-ha-ri-ya according to TLH^{dig}; see for example in KUB 32.50 Obv. 18', 19' and 23' (CTH 485). A term written ú-ri-ya is also to be found in what appears to be a Hurrian mythologeme involving the god Tešob in KBo 20.134++ obv. 10²⁶.

If there is indeed a combination of Hattian and Hurrian terms as argued here, with the participation of foreigners, this tablet fragment could very well belong to the AN.TAH.ŠUM festival corpus, where such a combination is attested²⁷. We certainly hope that the emergence of new textual parallels will disambiguate some of the readings of this document.

26 Volkert Haas, *Die Serien itkahi und itkalzi des AŽU-Priesters, Rituale für Tašmišarri und Tatuhepa sowie weitere Texte mit Bezug auf Tašmišarri*, Corpus der hurritischen Sprachdenkmäler I/1, Rome 1984, p. 281 n°52 and Dennis Campbell, “The Old Hurrian Verb”, in *VI Congresso Internazionale di Ittologia Roma, 5-9 settembre 2005*, eds. Alfonso Archi-Rita Francia, *Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici* 49, 2007, p. 82. We are grateful toward Stefano de Martino for providing us with Campbell's reference.

27 For Hattian terms in the AN.TAH.ŠUM ensemble, see for example Enrico Badali-Christian Zinko, *Der 16. Tag des AN.TAH.ŠUM-Festes*, Scientia 20, Innsbruck 1994, p. 138. For Hurrian terms in the same corpus, see for example the Hurrian ritualistic term kula/umarši mentioned during the 24th day of the AN.TAH.ŠUM festival according to Volkert Haas-Ilse Wegner, “Betrachtungen zum hethitischen Festkalender: die Kulthandlungen des 11. und des 22. bis 26. Tages des AN. TAH.ŠUMSAR-Festes”, in *Hittite and Other Anatolian and Near Eastern Studies in Honour of Sedat Alp*, ed. Heinrich Otten-Ekrem Akurgal-Hayri Ertem-Aygül Suel, Ankara 1992, p. 251. About the Hurrian term kula/umarši, see Thomas Richter, *Bibliographisches Glossar des Hurritischen*, Wiesbaden 2012, p. 220.

Conclusion

This study has undertaken a detailed analysis of three inscribed Hittite artifacts preserved in the Erimtan Museum: a stone seal, a seal impression on a clay bulla, and a fragmentary cuneiform tablet. While these objects may appear modest in scale and fragmented in nature, their combined significance lies not only in the specific insights they offer into Late Bronze Age Anatolia but also in the broader methodological and historiographical implications they evoke. Taken together, these artifacts reflect the value of revisiting unprovenanced or privately held materials with a rigorous, interdisciplinary lens.

The two seals—one intact and one preserved as an impression—invite a renewed reflection on the role of glyptic art and administrative symbolism in the Hittite world. The biconvex stone seal provides an instructive case for analyzing Hieroglyphic naming formulas, carving techniques, and visual organization. The identification of the logogram $PORTA_2$ and its potential phonetic reading, along with comparative references to seals from Hattuša, Adana, and Gaziantep, offers a detailed picture of the iconographic norms that governed elite identity representation. Meanwhile, the clay bulla with a concentric dual-ring design adds a valuable example of composite visual and textual communication, whereby decorative motifs frame formal inscriptions that follow standard naming and title conventions. The presence of Hieroglyphic signs such as $PURUS$, VIR , and potentially $AURIGA$ underscores the standardization of elite representation through glyptic media, and its comparative study contributes to the fine-tuning of Anatolian Hieroglyphic paleography.

The third object, a cuneiform tablet fragment, perhaps presents the most challenging yet promising avenue for philological and historical inquiry. Though fragmentary and partially illegible, the preserved traces—particularly the appearance of Hattian and possibly Hurrian words—suggest a connection to the textual corpus of the $AN.TAH.ŠUM$ festival. This possibility opens a valuable window into the complex ritual and linguistic layering of Hittite religious practice, where multilingualism and regional cultural integration were not peripheral but constitutive elements of ceremonial life. The combination of words such as *uiya* and *uriya*, which resonate with both Hattian and Hurrian traditions, points to the hybrid textual ecologies within which Hittite religious ceremonies were performed and transmitted. Even without a secure archaeological context, the linguistic content of the tablet invites comparative readings with securely

provenanced religious texts, expanding the interpretive framework within which such fragmentary data can be situated.

More broadly, the study highlights the scholarly importance of engaging with artifacts from private collections. Despite the long-standing preference in archaeology and epigraphy for securely excavated and contextualized materials, there exists a parallel corpus of museum-held or privately acquired objects that, when approached with methodological care, can yield significant academic dividends. The case of the Erimtan Museum is illustrative in this respect: the institution's willingness to collaborate with researchers and facilitate the systematic publication of its holdings transforms potentially isolated objects into data-rich contributions to Anatolian scholarship. Indeed, this study reaffirms the potential for rigorous documentation, imaging technologies such as RTI (Reflectance Transformation Imaging), and comparative analysis to restore scholarly value to artifacts that might otherwise remain underutilized.

One of the most important contributions of this study lies in its interdisciplinary orientation. The combined use of epigraphy, philology, iconography, and comparative seal typologies demonstrates how different analytical lenses can converge to produce historically meaningful interpretations from minimal or damaged evidence. Moreover, the involvement of scholars specialized in Hurrian and Hittite studies, as well as Anatolian glyptic, underscores the collaborative nature of responsible epigraphic scholarship. Particularly in the case of the tablet fragment, where readings are tentative and interpretive boundaries remain fluid, the application of multiple expert perspectives becomes indispensable.

This investigation also raises broader questions about the ethics and responsibilities involved in working with unprovenanced or museum-held artifacts. While these objects offer great academic value, their lack of archaeological context imposes limitations on chronological precision, spatial reconstruction, and broader cultural association. For this reason, the study insists on methodological transparency, tentative readings, and clearly delineated degrees of certainty. Such an approach allows scholars to contribute new knowledge while acknowledging the epistemic constraints inherent in the material. It also calls for a more sustained dialogue between field archaeology and museum studies, as well as between heritage professionals and researchers, to ensure that even contextually ambiguous artifacts are integrated into broader historical narratives with appropriate caution and critical reflection.

Finally, this publication serves as a reminder that the past is not always rediscovered in monumental inscriptions or richly adorned tombs, but sometimes in small, worn objects tucked away in museum storerooms. Each of the three artifacts presented here—despite their modest size and incomplete preservation—has contributed to our understanding of the Hittite world. The seal and seal impression have refined our knowledge of naming practices, administrative symbolism, and regional variations in Hieroglyphic writing. The tablet fragment, despite its eroded state, has provided possible links to religious ceremonies, interlingual dynamics, and ritualized expressions of multicultural layers of Hittite cultic life.

As more collections become available for study and as imaging and analytic technologies continue to improve, the integration of overlooked or fragmentary artifacts into mainstream scholarship will become increasingly feasible and necessary. Future research might be built upon the preliminary identifications offered here, employing digital reconstruction, comparative philological analysis, and formal cataloging to further clarify the role of these objects within their respective cultural frameworks. In this way, this article contributes not only to Hittite epigraphy and archaeology but also to the methodologies through which knowledge of the ancient world is assembled, debated, and advanced.

Author Contributions

Conceiving the Study	Author-1 (%50) - Author-2 (%50)
Data Collection	Author-1 (%50) - Author-2 (%50)
Data Analysis	Author-1 (%50) - Author-2 (%50)
Writing up	Author-1 (%50) - Author-2 (%50)
Submission and Revision	Author-1 (%50) - Author-2 (%50)

The Author(s) declare(s) that there is no conflict of interest/Çıkar çatışması beyan edilmemiştir.

Review

This article has been reviewed by at least two reviewers using a double blind peer review model. A similarity check was performed to confirm that it was free of plagiarism.

Ethical Statement

It is declared that scientific and ethical principles were complied with during the preparation of this study and all the works referred are mentioned in the bibliography.

Official authorization for the study and publication of the aforementioned artifacts was obtained from the Directorate of the Ermitan Museum on 13 November 2024.

Complaints

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Use of Artificial Intelligence

No artificial intelligence-based tools or applications were used in the preparation of this study. The entire content of the manuscript was produced by the authors in accordance with scientific research methods and academic ethical principles.

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Değerlendirme

Bu makale en az iki hakem tarafından çift taraflı kör hakemlik modeliyle incelendi. Benzerlik taraması yapılarak intihal içermediği teyit edildi.

Etik Beyan

Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde bilimsel ve etik ilkelere uyulduğu ve yararlanılan tüm çalışmaların kaynakçada belirtildiği beyan olunur.

Söz konusu eserlerin incelenmesi ve yayımlanmasına ilişkin resmi izin, 13 Kasım 2024 tarihinde Ermitan Müzesi Müdürlüğü tarafından verilmiştir.

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Yapay Zeka Kullanımı

Bu çalışmanın hazırlanma sürecinde yapay zekâ tabanlı herhangi bir araç veya uygulama kullanılmamıştır. Çalışmanın tüm içeriği, yazarlar tarafından bilimsel araştırma yöntemleri ve akademik etik ilkelere uygun şekilde üretilmiştir.

Lisans

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