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THE ORIGIN OF THE DISCOVERED URARTIAN BULLA IN ZIWIYE

ABSTRACT: There are several discovered Urartian artifacts and among them are the bullae. They are sometimes inscribed and sealed with cylinder and/or stamp seals. The impressions sometimes contain an inscription along with a royal, mythical or ritual scene. Royal impressions include the figure and the inscription of King Rusa II. There is an Urartian bulla from Ziwiyé with a stamp seal impression representing Rusa's figure, a parasol over his head and an inscription which resembles the impressions of Ayanis bullae. Additionally, cylinder seal impressions with similar iconography and inscription are discovered in Bastam and Toprakkale. There are previous contributions on the bulla of Ziwiyé but none are about its inscription or the detail of the impression in comparison with other bullae. The inscription on the bulla from Ziwiyé as Dḫal-di URU (the city of God Ḫaldi). There were several cities of Ḫaldi in the Urartian kingdom but as the impression of Ziwiyé bulla resembles to bullae of Ayanis, it is possible that the city this bulla came from was close to or under the control of Ayanis.

KEYWORDS: Urartu; Ziwiyé; Bulla; City of Ḫaldi; Ayanis

Introduction

Urartians ruled over the regions of Lake Urmia in North West of today's Iran, Sevan Lake in Armenia, Lake Van and Çıldır Lake in Turkey from about 9th to

7th centuries BC. Several inscriptions, artifacts, pottery and monuments have remained from the Urartian reign. Bullae are among the tiniest objects from the era that are discovered in some Urartian sites including Bastam, Ayanis, Toprakkale, and Upper Anzaf (Salvini 2012, 173-206). The Urartian bullae are sometimes inscribed or sealed by the stamp or cylinder seals.

The Urartian bullae were possibly used for the objects, vessels, packages, bags, boxes and bones to be sent, received or stored. The content of their inscriptions included numerals, city names, and officials' or other people's names. Sometimes from/to whom and where they belonged could be recognized from the bullae inscriptions. Seal impressions and their inscriptions contain significant information of antiquity. The Urartian inscribed cylinder and stamp seal impressions could imply the seal bearer, the official's degree, name, land and beliefs.

The preserved bullae are from the reign of Rusa II, son of Argišti, or perhaps even after him. According to Çilingiroğlu (2019: 124), the sealed and inscribed bullae on the pithoi were the commercial innovation of Rusa II and according to Salvini (1979, 134-136), the bullae proved Urartu to be a powerful administration center.

1417 bullae have been discovered in Bastam but only one inscribed Urartian bulla with the stamp seal impression has been found in Ziwiye, Iran – not an Urartian site (Pl. 1: 1). The rectangular impression includes the depiction of the king and a parasol over his head with the inscription around the scene. The name of the king is mentioned in the inscription as Rusa, son of Argišti. It seems that he ruled in the first half of the seventh century BC, concurrent with Esarhaddon's reign in Assyria. The seal impression of Ziwiye was published in the contributions of Salvini (2001, 318, Ay-1; 2012, 211, Sig. 12-3) and the author (Dara 2017, 252-253). But the inscription around the narrow surface of the bulla was not recognized and studied before. Additionally, the complete, detailed comparison between the impression on the bulla of Ziwiye and the similar ones has never been carried out. Several questions arose in the mind of the author, including: What is the translation of the bulla inscription and its interpretation? Where could be the place mentioned on the bulla of Ziwiye? Could this stamp impression be compared with the cylinder seal impressions of Rusa? What are the similarities and differences between Ziwiye and other impressions, such as those discovered in Ayanis and Bastam? Could this bulla have been made in Ziwiye or was it imported to the region? What are the potential production places of the bulla discovered in Ziwiye?

The aim of the author here is to translate the inscription on the Ziwiye bulla and to study the similarities and differences between Ziwiye, Ayanis, Toprakale and Bastam seal impressions of Rusa. Additionally, it is significant to find out the place this bulla was sent from to Ziwiye.

Accordingly, this study is carried out through library and field research. The bulla of Ziwiye is studied directly in the warehouse of the National Museum along with similar bullae from Bastam. The rest of the study and the comparisons were done via the library research on the previous contributions about Ayanis and Toprakkale bullae, the Anzaf tablet, and stone inscriptions.

The Urartian Bulla from Ziwiye

Ziwiye fortification in east of Saqqez, Kurdistan province, Iran is outside the ancient borders of the Urartian kingdom but several artifacts similar to those of the Urartians have been discovered in the site (Kantor 1960; Wilkinson 1963; Zimansky 1998, 283; Dara 2022b, 153). Among them is an Urartian bulla with a rare rectangular stamp seal impression (Pl. 1: 2-3, 2: 1) that is only comparable to a few impressions from Ayanis and a one-line inscription is written around its narrow side.

This bulla is kept in The National Museum with the number 13210. This buff and slightly smoky bulla exhibiting fractions is 3.5cm long and 2.8cm wide. The seal impression of 2.5 to 1.5cm contains the scene of the king's figure facing right and holding a bow in one hand; the other hand is raised above and the bow is supported on the ground. Details of the king's outfit are unclear due to the damages but he wears a long robe and a pointed helmet and has long hair but no beard similar to other impressions of Rusa. A part of a decorated parasol is seen over his head but no servant is depicted holding it. An unclear object is depicted on the upper part of the bow.

The Urartian one-line cuneiform inscription is written along three sides around the king. It starts from the right, turns to bellow of the scene and goes to the left side of the king's figure. The seal impression inscription is reconstructed as follows: ^[m]ru'-sa-i (right), ^[m]ar' (bottom) and giš-ti-ḫi-'ni-i' (left) meaning: "[The seal of] Rusa, son of Argišti." The word "seal" (*KIŠIB*) is not written but as Rusa is written in the genitive case and according to the longer version of Rusa's impressions in Bastam (Dara 2017, 247-252) the author put "seal" in the parentheses to show it should have been written here but was left out possibly

due to the lack of space. The hole for the sealing string is below the seal impression and the impression gets damaged after the sealing is broken. The inscription of the seal impression and the similar Urartian impressions of Rusa II show that the figure is Rusa.

There is a one-line inscription on the narrow surface of the bulla whose beginning is broken and damaged due to the seal having been broken (Pl. 2: 1). It reads: *ḏhal-di URU* (the city of God Ḫaldi). This is a rather short version of a grammatically correct form of *ḏhal-di-e-i URU* in order to demonstrate the genitive-dative case of the word. Regarding the epigraphy, one must state that *di* is rarely inscribed in this method. Only one similar epigraphy is detected on a tablet from Anzaf (Salvini 2012, CT An.1, §25).

The Comparison between Ziwiye Bulla and Other Urartian Bullae

There are a number of similar seal impressions discovered in Toprakkale, Ayanis and Bastam. A similar impression in Ayanis, AY.24.94, appears twice on the same bulla (Abay 2001, 327; Salvini 2001, 318, Ay-1) (Pl. 2: 2-3). Another fragment of the same bulla with the similar impression is also discovered (Çilingiroğlu and Işıkly 2014, Resim 2) (Pl. 2: 6). The impression on the right is better preserved than the other one. But due to the damage, it is not obvious whether the king holds a bow or scepter in his hand. The size of the impression is different from the that in Ziwiye and the inscription reads: *[^mru]-sa-i [^mar-giš-te-ḫi-[ni-i]*.

Also, the impression AYN.15.XV.151 (or 2015-5037-A) with the parasol left of the whole scene has been discovered in Ayanis (Işık *et al.* 2021, 9, Fig. 15 a) (Pl. 2: 4) as well as AYN.14.XV.21, also in Ayanis, with the same inscription (Işık and Işikli 2015, 145) (Pl. 2: 5). The figure of the king and a part of the parasol are visible despite the damage.

Additionally, both sides of the severely damaged bulla Ay-53 from Ayanis bear similar impressions (Salvini 2012, 197, Ay-53) (Pl. 3: 1). A fragment of bulla AYN.15.XV.65 (Pl. 3: 2) from Ayanis with just a part of the impression with the parasol and the *ar-* from the inscription has been discovered as well. Abay mentions the impression Ay.17.32.96 (2001, 328, Fig. 6) that looks a lot like the one from Ziwiye, and Salvini suggested that perhaps also this seal was used over bulla AY.17.34.96 (Salvini 2012, 210). Salvini also presented the photo of a dou-

ble impression on a bulla in 2012 (211, Sig. 12-3) and commented it is AY.24.94, but the photo is different from his contribution in 2001. Additionally, there is a reported bulla from Ayanis with three similar impressions (Çilingirođlu and Işikly 2014, Resim 2).

Several bullae from Bastam (Dara 2017, 247-253) (Pl. 3: 3) and Toprakkale (Salvini 2012, 210) with a cylinder impression of Rusa II along with a servant holding a parasol walking right behind a lion and a trident have been discovered so far. The king's figure with raised hands, holding a scepter, wearing a pointed helmet and a long robe, with long hair but without the beard is similar to the stamp seal impressions mentioned of Ayanis and Ziwiyé. It seems that the stamp seal impressions of Ayanis and Ziwiyé are shortened versions of Bastam cylinder seal impression scenes (Dara 2022a, 50). The author recognized at least two types of Rusa's cylinder seal impressions in Bastam according to the size of the elements, the position of the cuneiform signs and the elements of the scene, and the detail of the elements configuration (Dara 2022a).

Regarding the inscription of the bulla, "the city of God ̄aldi" is not found in other Urartian bullae, but ^Dhal-di-e-i URU has been detected on the following stone inscriptions so far. The construction of "the city of God ̄aldi" is mentioned on an inscription discovered in the building of Gúsak chapel near the north east of Lake Van by Minua (Salvini 2008, A 5-36, §6). Additionally, building "the city of God ̄aldi" is mentioned in the inscription in Bařkale from Minua's reign. Sarduri II mentioned the construction of a garden in the city of God ̄aldi on a stone inscription in Armavir (Salvini 2008, A 9-12, §1). Then, Rusa I constructed a fortification called "the city of God ̄aldi" in Gavar in the west of Sevan. Finally, Rusa II mentioned the construction of "the city of God ̄aldi" in Adilcevaz-Kefkalasi as ^Dhaldi=ei URU ^{KUR}ziúquni=i. It seems that these kings built several cities of God ̄aldi in different regions for the same or different purposes, which remain unknown. It is also possible that there were other cities of God ̄aldi that we do not know about and have found no piece of evidence yet.

Analysis

It is unfortunate that all the mentioned impressions are damaged and none is completely untouched. But still they allow comparisons. The figure of the king, the object he holds, his gesture, his outfit and a part of the parasol in the stamp

impressions of Ayanis and Ziwiye are similar although slightly different in details. The king on the Ziwiye impression holds a bow with a knob on top but the king on the impression of Ayanis seems to hold a scepter with a knob.

Additionally, the position of the cuneiform signs in relation to the king's figure sometimes varies. The sizes of the impressions are different as well although this is not meaningful as making the impression was affected by the way the seals were to be used.

The figure is holding a bow or scepter in all the mentioned impressions but still there was the need of other elements to present his royal status. The author suggests that the parasol is depicted in the scene in order to illustrate the person as the king. The parasol and the servant on the longer version of the scene of the impression from Bastam and Toprakkale could be the signs of the main figure's power and to highlight the central character as the king. The stamp seal impression scene is more limited in space as compared to the cylinder impressions, therefore, only the parasol element could show the main character as the king in the impressions. Muscarella (1999, 1-7) and Hellwag (2012, 209-210) commented on the parasol as the symbol of the king's authority in the Near East, which is present on an Assyrian seal from 13th century BC.

According to Ayvazian (2004, 123, 128), the person holding parasol was a high priest in a religious and cultic scene, not a simple servant. But even if he is a priest, he serves the main character by bringing the parasol. The author does not agree with the idea of this smaller figure to be the priest and supposes each element has a symbolic role. The parasol is even depicted on the pottery in Armavir (Ayvazian 2006, MM AR 35) and as a stamp seal impression on the pottery from Karmir-blur (Ayvazian 2006, KB 83) and Armavir (Ayvazian 2006, AR 20-21) and according to Ayvazian it could be a single sign, possibly a hieroglyphic, which the author cannot agree with since the parasol is mostly depicted with a complete figure of a servant whereas the hieroglyph system in Urartu only includes heads, not whole bodies, besides the parasol is sometimes depicted partly over the king's head as a symbol, not a hieroglyphic sign. The author suggests that the servant is pictured with a parasol to demonstrate the significance of the other person as the king. Additionally, it is to be mentioned that this other person is pictured taller than the servant to show his high-ranking position.

The third figure recognized on the cylinder impressions is the lion walking right with a curled-up tail. It is the symbol of the god and king's power and is also depicted on metal artifacts (Dara 2022b, 42-48). Then, the trident in the longer version of Rusa's impressions from Bastam are recognizable. According

to Black and Green (1992, 85), the trident, or *mazlagum* in Old Assyrian, cannot be assigned to a specific deity in Mesopotamia. Baštürk (2011, 165) suggested it is the depiction of a real pitchfork or could have the symbolic meaning of barley or even an agriculture god or goddess and the whole scene is the representation of the king, a god (supposedly 𐎶𐎠𐎢𐎽) and agriculture. It is conceivable that the trident is the hieroglyph symbol of barely (Salvini 2001, 302) or another agricultural product (Dara 2018, 46) as well. It could be related to the fertility and its controlling power by the king. All in all it could be another element in the cylinder impressions of Rusa to help recognizing the powerful figure as king Rusa. The author, therefore, suggests that all the four elements on the cylinder impressions of Rusa in Bastam and Toprakkale are depicted to present the king and his powers.

Significant as the bulla inscription of Ziwiyé is, it has never been paid attention to before. “The city of God 𐎶𐎠𐎢𐎽” is detected on the bulla for the first time. The place itself was mentioned on stone inscriptions of several Urartian kings in different locations, therefore, it seems that for whatever reason, there were several cities of God 𐎶𐎠𐎢𐎽 and this bulla came from one of them. It is even possible that it came from a city of God 𐎶𐎠𐎢𐎽 that has not been discovered yet.

But the mentioned city on the bulla of Ziwiyé should be studied also with respect to its seal impression. Ziwiyé was not an Urartian territory, therefore, the Urartian bulla of Ziwiyé must have been sent there at an unknown time for an unknown reason. This rectangular stamp seal impression has only been discovered in Ayanis excavations and it is also possible that the similar seal was also used in another Urartian site that has not been identified yet. Ayanis was also constructed by Rusa, son of Argišti. The impressions of Bastam, another city by Rusa, are not identical, therefore, although Bastam was closer to Ziwiyé than Ayanis, it is not the production place of this bulla as no stamp seal impression of Rusa has been discovered there. The impressions found in Toprakkale seem very few (Salvini 2012, 210) and similar to Bastam ones.

As mentioned above, the bulla of Ziwiyé could have come from any of the known cities of 𐎶𐎠𐎢𐎽 but the impression is more similar to those of Ayanis, therefore, it is possible it was made in any of the known— such as Adilcevaz (the city constructed by Rusa), north east of Lake Van or west of Sevan Lake – or unknown cities of 𐎶𐎠𐎢𐎽. However, the most possible places where the bulla of Ziwiyé was produced seem to be Ayanis, a place under its control or a place where the bullae discovered in Ayanis came from. It is also important to remember that the size and detail of the impressions discovered in Ayanis are diverse,

meaning that the impressions discovered in Ayanis were possibly sent to Ayanis from various places. In this case, it is possible that the bulla of Ziwiye came from any city of ̤aldi. The seal holders of Rusa II could be any high official since it is impossible that Rusa used the seal himself in different regions on the bullae (Zimansky 1979, 54; Dara 2022a, 49-50). Zimansky (1988, 123) supposes it is possible that Rusa's seals were even reused after his reign.

It is difficult to judge whether the bullae from Ayanis were produced in Ayanis or came from other places but some of the them bear the names of the cities and lands. It also seems that the place mentioned in the inscription of bulla AYN.15.XV.65 with a similar seal impression from Ayanis (^{KUR}*ar-tar*) appeared on other bullae from Ayanis as CB AY-17 and 18 (Salvini 2012), which means that the referenced land was close to or under tribute or control of Ayanis.

Results

As mentioned earlier, the seal impressions and the inscriptions over the bullae could provide significant pieces of information regardless of their tiny size. Urartian bullae have been discovered in several sites but there is only one such discovered from Ziwiye – a non-Urartian site. The stamp seal impression over it resembles a lot to the impressions discovered in Ayanis with the figure of the king and a part of a parasol over his head. Another version of Rusa's cylinder impression is seen in a large number of bullae from Bastam and Toprakkale that depict Rusa along with his servant and a parasol, a lion and a trident with all these other elements being potentially added to convey the message that the central character is king Rusa. The limited space of the stamp seal impressions of Ziwiye and Ayanis forced the seal producer to use only one element (the parasol) in order to show the depicted person was Rusa. Although these stamp seal impressions are similar, they are not impressed by the same seal as evidenced by the difference in their details. It is also possible that the seal of Rusa was in the possession of high-ranking seal bearers.

The inscription incised over the narrow side of the bulla is ^D*hal-di URU* (the city of God ̤aldi). This is the first time that the short version of “the city of God ̤aldi” is found on a bulla. Other examples are discovered on stone inscriptions of several Urartian kings. It seems that, for whatever, there were several cities of ̤aldi in the Urartian kingdom, including north east of Lake Van, west of Sevan Lake and Adilcevaz-Kefkalasi. Therefore, the bulla of Ziwiye could have been

sent from any of the known or as yet unknown cities of ̤aldi. Nevertheless, the seal impression in Ziwiye resembles those of Ayanis. Therefore, it is most possible that this bulla was sent from Ayanis, a place under the control of Ayanis or a place close to Ayanis where the bullae of Ayanis came from to Ayanis itself and to Ziwiye. However, judging by the differences in the details of the impressions of Ziwiye and Ayanis, this one may have been sent from any other city of ̤aldi or from a city of ̤aldi close to or under the control of Ayanis. Therefore, the time and place of Ziwiye bulla production could only be speculated about on the basis of its impression and inscription, while a more precise study can only be carried out after finding more pieces of information on the Urartian bullae.

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Pl. 1: 1 – Map indicating where the bulla was found

Pl. 1: 2 – The stamp seal impression of Ziwiyé bulla. Photo by the author

Pl. 1: 3 – The sketch of the bulla and the stamp seal impression, made by the author



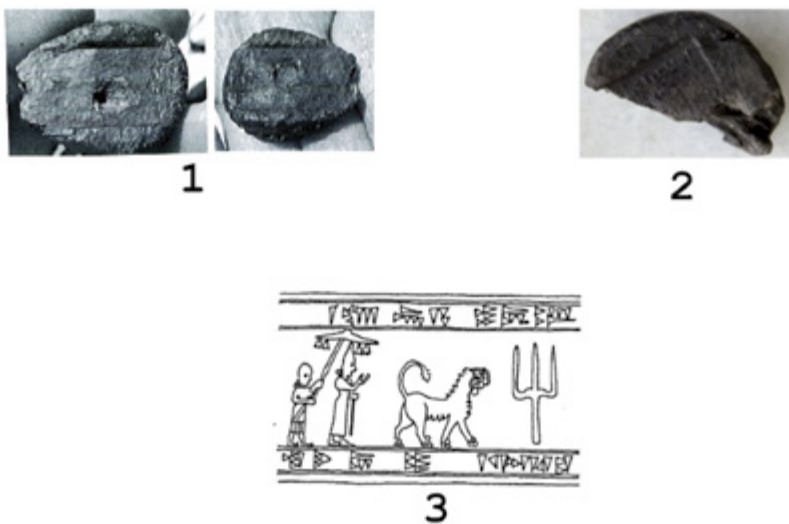
Pl. 2: 1 – The inscription of Ziyiye bulla. Photo by the author

Pl. 2: 2 – Bulla of Ayani, AY.24.94 (Salvini 2001, 318, Ay-1)

Pl. 2: 3 – The reconstruction by Abay (Abay 2001, 327, Fig. 5)

Pl. 2: 4 – Bulla of Ayani, AYN.15.XV.151 (Işık *et al.* 2021, Fig. 15a)

Pl. 2: 5 – Bulla of Ayani, AYN.14.XV.21 (Işık and Işikli 2015, 145)



Pl. 3: 1 – Bulla of Ayanis, Ay-53 (Salvini 2012, 197, Ay-53)

Pl. 3: 2 – Bulla of Ayanis, AYN.15.XV.65 (Işık *et al.* 2021, Fig. 7a)

Pl. 3: 3 – Reconstruction of Bastam bullae cylinder seal impression (Seidl 1988, 146, B 2)