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## Reflections of Levant and Mesopotamia gods and goddess on Cyprus cylinder seals

### LEVANT VE MEZOPOTAMYA TANRI VE TANRIÇALARININ KIBRIS SİLİNDİR MÜHÜRLERİ ÜZERİNDEKİ YANSIMALARI

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#### Abstract

The aim of the research is to determine the similarities between the Cyprus and Levant & Mesopotamian cylinder seals, on which god and goddess figures are engraved on them. The research is important in terms of showing the effects and similarities of mainland cultures and artistic products through Levant & Mesopotamian mainland and Cyprus island cultures. The research stems from a case study model, which will involve qualitative research methods. Visual analysis was carried out in two stages. In the first stage, 67 seal images were given to six creative education experts. Experts stated that there are figures of a god and goddess on 34 cylinder seals. In the second stage, 34 seal images were examined by three visual arts experts. The infographic analyses have shown that the god-goddess figures on the Levant & Mesopotamian and Cyprus cylinder seals are similar or bear close resemblances. This result shows that ancient civilisations shared the material and spiritual values of the culture in a "fluid and sticky" character. This sharing feature should be accepted, supported and protected as a guide to the way of living together, which today's people need.

**Keywords:** Cylinder seals, Cyprus, god, goddess, Levant & Mesopotamia, religion.

#### Introduction

The first human being existence in Cyprus was mentioned to be in 12,000 BC (Simons, 2012). The places where human beings were present, can be mentioned to be in the Late Epipaleolithic period, on the island of Cyprus, were Aetokremnos and Akamas. Throughout the history, islands have always been influenced by

#### Özet

Araştırmanın amacı, üzerlerine tanrı veya tanrıça figürlerinin işlendiği Kıbrıs ve Levant&Mezopotamya silindir mühürleri arasındaki benzerlikleri saptamaktır. Araştırma, Levant&Mezopotamya ve Kıbrıs adası kültürleri örnekleri üzerinden, anakara kültürlerinin ve sanatsal ürünlerinin ada kültürlerine etkilerini ve benzerliklerini göstermesi açısından önemlidir. Araştırma, nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden olan durum çalışması modelinde tasarlanmıştır. Görsel analizler iki aşamada gerçekleştirilmiştir. İlk aşamada, 67 adet mühür görseli, yaratıcılık eğitimi alanında uzman 6 eğitimci tarafından incelenmiştir. Uzmanlar, 34 tane silindir mühür üzerinde, tanrı veya tanrıça figürü olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. İkinci aşamada 34 tane silindir mühür görseli üç görsel sanatlar uzmanı tarafından incelenmiştir. Yapılan infografik analizler, Levant&Mezopotamya ve Kıbrıs silindir mühürlerindeki tanrı veya tanrıça figürlerinin kesin benzerlikler veya yakın benzerlikler taşıdığını göstermiştir. Bu sonuç, eski uygarlıkların, kültürün maddi ve manevi değerlerini "akıcı ve yapışkan" bir karakterde paylaştığını göstermektedir.

Bu paylaşma özelliği, günümüz insanının ihtiyaç duyduğu, birlikte yaşama biçimi için bir rehber olarak kabul edilmeli, desteklenmeli ve korunmalıdır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Silindir mühürler, Kıbrıs, Tanrı ve Tanrıçalar, Levant&Mezopotamya, Din.

the life on the mainland and continents close to them. After the occupation of the people, on the mainland, signs of human existence on the island of Cyprus, were found in the archaeological studies carried out in Aetokremnos (Swiny, 2001). According to the findings obtained from these archaeological settlements, the first settled

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human life on the island, began in the Neolithic Age (8500-3900 BC in the New Polished Stone Age) in these two settlements (Karageorghis, 2002). The human being presence on the island before the Late Epipaleolithic period continued also in the Palaeolithic periods. The seals were produced to perform tasks such as identifying identity, determining property, representing persons, conveying a message, and carrying a talisman feature. In particular, it is seen that, the relations between kings and gods or goddess were reflected in the engravings on the seals. The first examples of seals used on the island of Cyprus were found during excavations at Kissonerga-Mosphilia and Lemba-Lakkous. The seal found at Kissonerga-Mosphilia is a Late Chalcolithic Age IV limestone seal, with diagonal lines engraved on it. Another example is the seal with linear and curvilinear motifs found in Area II at Lemba-Lakkous. (Webb & Weingarten, 2012; Reyes, 2001).

The Neolithic Age in Cyprus is dated approximately between 7000 BC and 3000 BC. The same period covers the years 8200-3900 BC, according to Karageorghis. The Chalcolithic period is dated to be 3900-2500 BC (Karageorghis, 2002). According to Kyrris, the Early Bronze Age on the island is dated between 3000-1800 BC (Kyrris, 1985). Karageorghis accepts this period to be between 2500-1900 BC and divides it into three periods, as Early Bronze Age I-II and III (Karageorghis, 2002). After the Early Bronze Age, the Middle and Late Bronze Ages took place on the island of Cyprus. But again, according to the same sources, these ages are dated between 1900 BC and 1050 BC. The seals examined in this study consist of seals obtained from Late Bronze Age settlements in Cyprus. The settlement areas mentioned are Enkomi, Hagia Irene, Kition, Kalavassos-Ayios Dimitrios, Ankastina, Toumba Tou Skourou, Dromolaxia-Vyzakia (Hala Sultan Tekke).

The use of cylinder seals in Cyprus, along with the Middle East, took place between the end of 3000 BC and the beginning of 2000 BC (Reyes, 2001). According to the data obtained from the dating of cylinder seals obtained from archaeological excavations and exhibited in museums, the use of cylinder seals in Cyprus dates back to 3000 BC (Karageorghis, 2002). In this research, the cylinder seals used in Cyprus, engraved with images of gods or goddess, will be investigated and compared with the images of gods or goddess engraved/drawn on different materials in Levant & Mesopotamian cultures.

In this research, seals with images of god or goddess on the archaeological cylinder seals used in Cyprus and exhibited in Cyprus archaeology museums, British Museum, John Hopkins Museum, Medelhavsmuseet and the Metropolitan Museum's Cyprus artifacts sections were investigated. For this purpose, two hundred and fourteen (214) cylinder seals were visually analysed in order to identify seals having human body images (god and goddess) on them. With this method, it was aimed to investigate how many different gods or goddess images were engraved on the cylinder seals. In this context, the similarities with the images of gods or goddess in Levant & Mesopotamian cultures were examined.

Therefore, in the context of god or goddess images on archaeological cylinder seals, it is aimed to determine the similarities and differences between the spiritual-cultural structure of the country and the spiritual culture of Levant & Mesopotamian cultures.

This research is based on the seals used in the archaeological periods on the island of Cyprus. Research is important because it aims to determine the diversification of god or goddess images on seals, which has not been investigated as a primary subject in studies conducted until today and to examine them in a categorising mode. In addition, to the fact that there are connections regarding the images of gods or goddess, their engraving or drawings on different materials in neighbouring cultures are also within the scope of the research and this increases the importance of the research.

The fact that cylinder seals were used in a limited region in the world (Levant & Mesopotamia and cultures around the Mediterranean) and for a limited time (approximately between 3000-500 BC) makes them highly important. In the context of their importance, in those days; the fact that they were the best examples of art of relief, engraving and printmaking, creates the need to introduce them to the world and puts them on the agenda of today's art research.

It is thought that they deserve to be known more closely by today's artists and researchers because of their important place in both art and social life and trade of that period.

The subject of this research is limited to the archaeological cylinder seals used in Cyprus, which are exhibited in the archaeology museums in Cyprus and in the sections of the British Museum at John Hopkins Museum,

Medelhavsmuseet and the Metropolitan Museum where artifacts related to Cyprus are exhibited. In addition to the above limitations, another limitation is experienced, and that is, because the seals in museums located outside of Cyprus are included in the research, by using the web pages of the museums as an only possible source. Unfortunately visiting the museums abroad was not possible because of the Covid 19 pandemic, and this also created a limitation to this study.

### Method

This research was conducted as a qualitative case study. The seals used in Cyprus were selected based on those engraved with god and goddess images. These images were examined through iconographic and content analysis, categorizing them and comparing them to images of gods and goddess on cylinder seals from neighboring cultures. The iconographic approach, a qualitative research technique, was used to reveal the customary meanings of motifs, allegories, and personalizations that are no longer available in today's societies. This approach emphasizes that images characterized as iconographic should be evaluated within the context of the society, audience, history, and period they are associated with. Content analysis, on the other hand, involves the explanation of images through coding or using codes in order to ensure the scientific validity of the images. Thus, it is a technique that allows the researcher to approach reality without prejudices about the subject being studied. For these reasons, both iconographic and content analysis techniques were employed in this research (Bedir Erişti, 2019). In addition, the images comprising the study's sample were analyzed using the "visual analysis method."

During the data acquisition and analysis process, 214 seals were collected and included in the sample. Among these seals, those on display at the British Museum, John Hopkins Museum, Medelhavsmuseet, and the Metropolitan Museum were accessed through the museums' websites and their visuals were obtained. Photographs of the specimens on display in Paphos, Larnaca, Nicosia, Limassol Archeology Museum, Morphou Archeology and Nature Museum were taken. The researcher visually analyzed the printed images of the 214 seals comprising the sample in terms of the imagery engraved on them. This sample was selected to include seals used and exhibited in Cyprus, and the dataset was limited by this exhibition criterion. As a result of visual analysis, human or human-bodied images were found on 67 seals. These seal images, comprising a limited sample,

were tabulated with images of Levantine and Mesopotamian gods and goddess. Paintings consisting of seal images and god and goddess images were presented to six creativity education specialists for validity and reliability testing, and they were asked to identify which god or goddess images were on each seal.

Six creativity education experts identified gods and goddess on 34 seals from the Levantine and Mesopotamian regions out of the 67 seals. In the second stage of expert opinion collection, the 34 seals identified by the creativity education experts were presented to three visual arts professionals. The visual arts professionals were asked to determine how many seals had "definite similarity" and "likelihood similarity" in terms of the gods and goddess depicted on them.

Based on the opinions of the visual arts professionals, a comparison was made with seals from neighboring cultures of Cyprus, where similar images of gods and goddess are known to exist.

### Belief System Process in Cyprus

Cyprus is located in a geographical location that can be considered the centre of the old world (Asia-Africa-European continents). This important geographical position has caused it to maintain its strategic importance throughout the ages and today. In addition to the strategic importance of Cyprus due to its location, another feature that is at least as important as location is that it is adjacent to the geography where monotheistic religions originated. Cyprus has been a frequent destination for a very high percentage of those who want to reach the region where monotheistic religions originated, known as the holy lands. The emergence of monotheistic religions in this region is not accidental. It is important that the history of human life has not been interrupted in this geography by periods of warming and cooling of the earth. "From the first days of human being existence in the world; he has formed belief systems by establishing emotional ties with especially with very strong phenomena. That time of human being was worshipping to the phenomena that he was not having any idea why it happened or why it is so. For example, thunder, rain fall and many similar natural events, or a high mountain or a tall tree that he cannot climb or a very fruitful tree were the things that they were out of their imagination though they were accepting them as go or goddess. (Hañcerlioğlu, 2005)." The religion originated from the weakness of the first human being because of the forces of nature (Teber,

2013). Ancient religions have tried to be defined and understood by today's people, with the contribution of the writings and archaeological findings on the written materials of those periods. They also found new rituals as new data become available. The materials providing these data, are the findings obtained from the cultures lived mostly around Mesopotamia and the Mediterranean. The findings obtained during the research, on the cultures of this region, play an active role in defining the religious structure of that period in other parts of the world. In the light of these data, Demirci, in his book titled "Introduction to Ancient Levant & Mesopotamian Religions"; "We know that ancient Levant & Mesopotamian beliefs were largely based on animistic and naturistic foundations," he says. Many phenomena in nature are associated and equipped with either divine power or creatures with demonic character, or structures with supernatural vitality such as 'mana' (Demirci, 2013, p. 12). During this period, settlements (cities) belonging to different cultures that lived in Levant & Mesopotamia had their own gods. The gods who have undertaken the same tasks could be named in different ways between cultures and cities. It should also be noted that the religions in these cultures do not limit the relationships between gods and humans to a simple and archaic order. The relations between gods and humans of this period has developed very rich ideas with a lifestyle fed by the religious structure, such as the universal order, systems of worship, dedication and sacrifice, rituals and its place in the creation of man. With the animistic and naturistic approach in the form of religious thought, people living in Levant & Mesopotamian cultures engraved or drew the images of the gods as human bodies on the surfaces they worked on. In Cyprus, which was in interrelationship with Levant & Mesopotamian cultures, during the periods when this way of thinking continued, the images of gods on the cylinder seals, where religious scenes were studied, were also engraved in the same way. In addition, the Mitanni winged sun disk, one of the religious symbols, is among the common forms engraved on cylinder seals (Bender, 2007). In this context, it should be stated that they show close similarities.

As stated in the introduction of the research, the first human existence in Cyprus was mentioned since 12,000 BC (Simons, 2012). The places where the human presence can be mentioned in the Late Epipaleolithic period on the island of Cyprus are Aetokremnos and Akamas. Throughout the history, the islands have always been influenced by life on the continents or

motherlands close to them. Signs of human being existence on the island of Cyprus, were found by the occupation of people on the mainland with the archaeological studies carried out in Aetokremnos (Swiny, 2001).

It is thought that the belief system on the island, whose existence was determined after the above-mentioned years, is also related to the mainland and neighbouring cultures.

According to the data obtained from the findings reached today, the oldest known belief system of Cyprus is the 'Mother Goddess Cult'. The concrete assets of this belief system, which is dating back to the 8th millennium BC, are the conical stones found in many excavations. The belief system of the Mother Goddess was structured in Eastern cultures and spread into Western cultures. The belief system philosophy (belief, worship, ritual structuring) of the Mother Goddess, which is given different names in Eastern and Western cultures, overlaps with the Eastern and Western culture's philosophy at a very high level (Frankfort, 1939).

The Mother goddess, named in different forms according to cultures, was also imaged in different forms in this context. This structure, which constitutes the belief systems of the regional cultures in today's conditions, has also been adopted by the people living in Cyprus who were in contact with them. For representation of this belief system, which we can say came from outside with the influence of the mainland, Cypriots have placed and continue to keep the conical stones in place of the Mother Goddess since the Neolithic age. These stones were found in archaeological excavations carried out in many Neolithic and Bronze Age settlements, most intensely in Hirokitia excavations (Bağışkan, 2015).

It is possible to say that, it is the Mother Goddess Cult who adapted to Cyprus, the oldest belief system of the people in Cyprus. The system had relations with the Anatolian, Eastern Mediterranean, Egyptian and Levant & Mesopotamian cultures. This is thought so because since those dates are the times of the mentioned cultures. Worship systems to the Mother Goddess have appeared in many cultures around the Mediterranean and in Levant & Mesopotamian cultures. It took different names according to the culture in which it is accepted. Mother Goddess, "Kubaba" in Hittites, "Isis" in Egypt, "Kybebe" in Lydia, "Kybele" in Phrygia, "Inanna" in Sumer, "Artemis" in Greece, "Astarte" in Syria and Babylonian sources

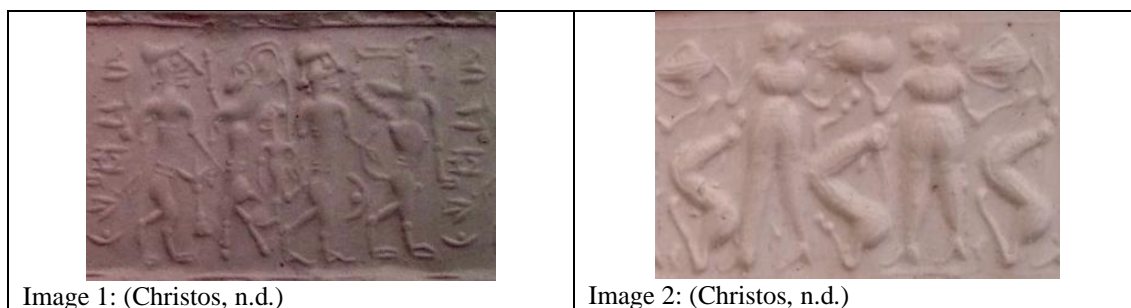
(“Astart” or “Ishtar”) (Ishtar is also referred to as “Savshga” in Hittite sources), “Ishtar” in Phoenician sources, “Artemis (from Ephesus)” in Ephesus, “Kouklia (Paphos) Aphrodite” in Cyprus. She also worshipped as “Venus” by the Romans and “Virgin Mary” in the Christian era. Images symbolising her in paintings and engravings; the moon, star, dove, Eurasian collared dove, sparrow, myrtle tree and rose (Bağışkan, 2015).

It is possible to say that with the cult of the Mother Goddess, which is the oldest known belief system in Cyprus, the islanders who formed the system increased their communication between the cultures of the region with the opportunity to travel in the following years. The people of Cyprus, who have been in the common belief system of the cultures of the region with the same cult since 8000 BC, intensified their relations with the cultures in the nearby geography with the improvement in trade in the region. In this context, cylinder seals, which were an important element of the trade of that period, it has been circulated among the cultures of the region, both as seals and as seal impressions on clay. It is also believed that cylinder seals, which can be hang in the form of a necklace on the neck and engraved with a god or goddess have a talisman feature that ensures success in trade.

Due to the intensifying relations of the Cypriot people, who have had partnerships with neighbouring cultures, since the first belief system; it is possible to say that, there are also similarities in the figures of gods and goddess engraved on cylinder seals brought to the island,

**Table 1.**

*Photographs of cylinder seals visually analysed.*



produced on the island, or on which additional figures were worked on, after being brought to the island. In addition, it is thought that there are similarities in the figures of gods and goddess on the seals made by the masters who made seals on the island (Yazgin, 2017).

In order to determine these similarities, the cylinder seals in the samples of the research were visually examined. The similarities of the gods and goddess figures on the seals in Levant & Mesopotamian cultures and Cyprus cylinder seals were determined by the visual analysis method. Cylinder seals used in Cyprus between 3000-600 BC, which has exactly similar god and goddess figures on them, and seals used in Levant & Mesopotamian cultures between about the same time span, were also determined and the figures on them were compared.

### **The Cyprus Seals Engraved with Human-Bodied Images**

Two hundred and fourteen (214) seals exhibited in the archaeology museums in Cyprus and in the sections of the British Museum, John Hopkins Museum, Medelhavsmuseet and the Metropolitan Museum where artifacts related to Cyprus are exhibited have been examined in terms of images engraved on them. As a result of this examination, sixty-seven (67) seals with human body images engraved on them, were found to be in accordance with the limitation and criteria expressed in the sample and visual analyses made. The author photographed images from 20 to 44 both included, Maria Soutzi photographed image 49 and Orkem Yazgin photographed image 67.



Image 3: (Cylinder Seal; Intaglio | British Museum, n.d.)



Image 4: (Cylinder Seal | British Museum, n.d.)



Image 5: (Cylinder Seal; Intaglio | British Museum, n.d.)



Image 6: (Cylinder Seal | British Museum, n.d.)



Image 7: (Cylinder Seal | British Museum, n.d.)



Image 8: (Cylinder Seal | British Museum, n.d.)



Image 9: (Cylinder Seal | British Museum, n.d.)



Image 10: (Cylinder Seal | British Museum, n.d.)



Image 11: (Cylinder Seal | British Museum, n.d.)



Image 12: (Cylinder Seal | British Museum, n.d.)



Image 13: (Cylinder Seal | British Museum, n.d.)



Image 14: (Cylinder Seal | British Museum, n.d.)













 <p>Image 15: (Cylinder Seal   British Museum, n.d.)</p>	 <p>Image 16: (Cylinder Seal   British Museum, n.d.)</p>
 <p>Image 17: (Cylinder Seal   British Museum, n.d.)</p>	 <p>Image 18: (Cylinder Seal   British Museum, n.d.)</p>
 <p>Image 19: (Cylinder Seal   British Museum, n.d.)</p>	 <p>Image 20: (The Cyprus Museum, n.d.)</p>
 <p>Image 21: (The Cyprus Museum, n.d.)</p>	 <p>Image 22: (The Cyprus Museum, n.d.)</p>
 <p>Image 23: (The Cyprus Museum, n.d.)</p>	 <p>Image 24: (The Cyprus Museum, n.d.)</p>
 <p>Image 25: (The Cyprus Museum, n.d.)</p>	 <p>Image 26: (The Cyprus Museum, n.d.)</p>



Image 27: (The Cyprus Museum, n.d.)



Image 28: (The Cyprus Museum, n.d.)



Image 29: (The Cyprus Museum, n.d.)



Image 30: (The Cyprus Museum, n.d.)



Image 31: (The Cyprus Museum, n.d.)



Image 32: (The Cyprus Museum, n.d.)



Image 33: (The Cyprus Museum, n.d.)



Image 34: (The Cyprus Museum, n.d.)



Image 35: (The Cyprus Museum, n.d.)



Image 36: (The Cyprus Museum, n.d.)



Image 37: (The Cyprus Museum, n.d.)



Image 38: (The Cyprus Museum, n.d.)



 <p>Image 39: (The Cyprus Museum, n.d.)</p>	 <p>Image 40: (The Cyprus Museum, n.d.)</p>
 <p>Image 41: (The Cyprus Museum, n.d.)</p>	 <p>Image 42: (The Cyprus Museum, n.d.)</p>
 <p>Image 43: (The Cyprus Museum, n.d.)</p>	 <p>Image 44: (The Cyprus Museum, n.d.)</p>
 <p>Image 45: (admin, n.d.)</p>	 <p>Image 46: (2023)</p>
 <p>Image 47: (Christos, n.d.)</p>	 <p>Image 48: (Christos, n.d.)</p>
 <p>Image 49: (Christos, n.d.)</p>	 <p>Image 50: (Cylinder Seal and Modern Impression: Demons and Animals   Late Cypriot II, n.d.)</p>



**Image 51:** (Cylinder Seal and Modern Impression: Seated Figure Holding the Tail of a Griffin | Cypriot | Late Cypriot II, n.d.)



**Image 52:** (Cylinder Seal and Modern Impression: Female Figure, Ibex, Lion | Cypriot | Late Cypriot II, n.d.)



**Image 53:** (Cylinder Seal and Modern Impression: Hunter Spearing a Lion before Deity with Staff | Middle Bronze Age, n.d.)



**Image 54:** (Cylinder Seal and Modern Impression: King before Nude Winged Goddess above Snake; Weather God on Bull | Cypriot | Late Cypriot I-II, n.d.)



**Image 55:** (Cylinder Seal and Modern Impression: Combat between Men and a Lion | Cypriot | Late Cypriot II, n.d.)



**Image 56:** (Cylinder Seal and Modern Impression: Mistress of Animals Flanked by Rampant Horned Animals | Cypriot | Late Cypriot II, n.d.)



**Image 57:** (Cylinder Seal | Cypriot | Late Cypriot, n.d.)



**Image 58:** (Cylinder Seal | Cypriot | Late Cypriot II, n.d.)



**Image 59:** (Cylinder Seal and Modern Impression: Human Figure Flanked by Sphinxes, Birds | Cypriot | Late Cypriot II, n.d.)



**Image 60:** (Cylinder Seal and Modern Impression: Master of Animals between Lions, Griffins, Minoan Genius | Late Cypriot II, n.d.)



Image 61: (Cylinder Seal | Cypriot | Late Cypriot, n.d.)



Image 62: (Cylinder Seal and Modern Impression: Animal-Headed Divinities with Prey | Cypriot | Late Cypriot II, n.d.)



Image 63: (Cylinder Seal and Modern Impression: Confronted Upright Lion and Griffin before a Seated Figure | Cypriot | Late Cypriot II, n.d.)



Image 64: (Cylinder Seal | Cypriot | Late Cypriot II, n.d.)



Image 65: (Cylinder Seal | Cypriot | Late Cypriot, n.d.)



Image 66: (Cylinder Seal | Cypriot | Late Cypriot, n.d.)



Image 67: (Archeology and Natural History Museum, n.d.)

### Findings and Interpretation

In the first step of the visual analyses, 67 Cyprus cylinder seal images, having human figures on them, are given to six creative education experts and asked them to analyse these seals under the fixed measures and criteria. Experts were asked to select seals with god-goddess figures and find out which Levant & Mesopotamian god or goddess they were. In this comparing study the book of William Hayes Wards (1910) book “The seal Cylinders of Western Asia” is used as the

main source. The experts, naturally, used other sources in their study. They found-out that the god & goddess figures on Levant & Mesopotamian and Cyprus seals have very close similarities, and on both group of seals similar figures were carved.

The experts stated that on 34, cylinder seals out of 67, there are images of Levant & Mesopotamian god & goddess. Especially on the non-worn and perfect seals the similarities were

decisive but they had some little doubts on worn-out ones.

The 34 seal images selected by the creative education experts are presented to three visual art professionals for the second stage of this study and analysis. One of the professionals found out that 24 seals were having god & goddess images decisively similar to the Levant & Mesopotamia gods. He also said that the images on the rest 10 seals, selected by the creative education experts, not decisively but probably are similar to Levant & Mesopotamian gods. The second professional

found 21 seals containing gods similar to Levant & Mesopotamian gods and the third professional said 27 of them have decisive similarities and on 7 of the seals have possible but doubtful similarities.

The images, “possibly not showing” similarities may be because of the carving artist’s mode of design or because the seals have worn out. As a final statement, we can say that the god or goddess figures on the seals are similar to those in Levant & Mesopotamian culture at a high rate.











**Table 2.**

*The order of the images is from exact similar to most likely to be similar.*















	
	
	
	
	
















	
	
	
	
	





	
	
	
	
	
	
	<p>(Department of Antiquities - Museums, n.d.)</p>

**Arguments and Suggestions**

In this research, the cylinder seals of Cyprus having god and goddess images on them are identified. Here, comparisons are made between the samples of cylinder seals of different cultures and regions of Levant & Mesopotamia. As a result of this comparison, it is found-out that the images on Cyprus and Levant & Mesopotamian cylinder seals showed close similarities regarding their religious belief systems.

On the cylinder seals used in Cyprus god and goddess figures are found that, they were the images of god and goddess of the cultures of Levant & Mesopotamia like, Sumerians, Assyrians, Akkadians, Hittites, Babylonians and Kassites, the 17 god and goddess names are listed below as:

1. The drinking goddess on a stool.
2. The naked goddess, Ishara.
3. The god with a wand (Ramman-Martu }
4. The standing goddess with rised hands (Aa or Sala)
5. The vested god, probably Tarkhu, Sandu or Khaldis.
6. The seated, bearded god, Shamas.
7. The naked goddess with the hands below her breasts (Zirbanit)
8. The god with the scimitar (Marduk)
9. The god with Thunderbolt and Bull (Adad)
10. The goddess of agriculture.
11. The archaic seated Deities.
12. The god rising over a mountain (Shamas)

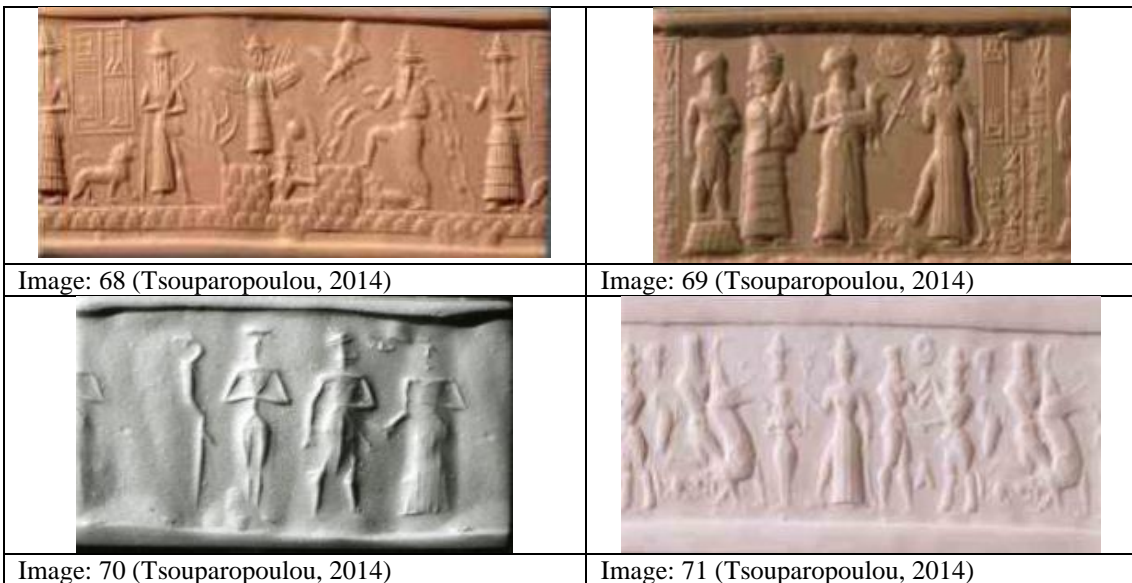
13. The standing Ishtar.
14. Gilgamesh as a standard listener.
15. The eagle-headed god.
16. The serpent god (Siru)
17. The seated goddess (Baru – Gula)

Besides, winged demon, which is very important in Assyrian culture of Mesopotamia ana Egypt - Hittite belief systems and in their mythology, is found on Cyprus cylinder seals. The dragon figure of Assyrian in Babylonian cultures is also found on Cyprus cylinder seals. Also, Gilgamesh figure, with wings and alike to “winged Satan” figures of Assyrian culture, found on Cyprus cylinder seals. Babylonian type Tiamat figure (The Dragon) is another figure found on Cyprus seals.

There are many researchers studying the similarities between the Cyprus and Levant & Mesopotamian spiritual cultures, covering the years BC 3000-600, about the carvings worked on the cylinder seals.

For example:

Tsouparopoulou (2014) Progress Report: In his “An Outline of the Documentation of Seals, Sealings and Seal Impressions in Ancient Near East”, Akkadian seal (image 68) Goddess Ishtar and God Shamas, Old Babylonian seals (image 69), God Marduk, (image 70) Goddess Zirbanit and God Rammon-Martu and (image 71) again the Goddess Zirbanit and the God Ishtar are taking place.



Black and Green (2004), in their book, *Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia*, they informed that, on a Neo Assyrian seal the Gilgamesh figure is carved. Also, Ghaempanah

and others (2014) in their paper they published, informed that on a Babylonian seal the figures of Gilgamesh and Enkidu are carved.



Image: 72 (Black and Green, 2004)



Image: 73 (Ghaempanah and others, 2014)

Konstantopoulos (2018) in his book, *Inscribed Kossite cylinder seals in the Metropolitan Museum*, he says that, on two, cylinder seals of

Late Old Babylonian and Early Kassite era the images of Marduk-Sarpanitrum (image 74) and Ninsubur-Papsuskal (image 75) are present.



Image: 74 (Konstantopoulos, 2018)



Image: 75 (Konstantopoulos, 2018)

Ornan (2004) in his paper, *The Goddess Gula and Her Dog*, on one of the old Babylonian seals the image of Goddess Gula, and on the other one the Sumerian God Lama is carved. On both of these seals the figures of god and goddess figures are

also presented (image 76a-76b). We also see similar god and goddess engravings in Bakel's article "Identifying Nergal, Nanna, Enbilulu, Ninazu and Enlil on cylinder seals" (Bakel, n.d.).



Image: 76a (Ornan, 2004)



Image: 76b (Ornan, 2004)

According to the Metropolitan Museum sources, the image 77 is said to be an Akkadian seal (2021). The Snake God carved on this seal is also seen on the Cyprus cylinder seals. According to the British Museum sources, on image 78, the

God Tiamat is identified as a dragon (Cylinder Seal | British Museum, n.d.). While in Akkadian culture it is named as Sea God. The same images are presented on the Cyprus cylinder seals as well.



Image: 77 (Wiggermann, 1997)



Image: 78 (Cylinder Seal | British Museum, n.d.)

Middle East geography that our today's religions came out was also covering the geography of Mesopotamia. In the long-last old cultures of Mesopotamia, there was a structure of happenings or creations of religious rituals, belief systems and god-goddess identification that undeniably, they can be models to our today's life. In old cultures of Mesopotamia, not only the countries but even the cities were having their own private gods and goddess. In the times of those cultures, if a culture was giving a duty to its private god or goddess and that was accepted by other cultures, they were naming their god or goddess with the same name and sometimes as the translation of their languages. In different cultures although the names of gods and goddess were different, the images were interpreted similarly by the designers or carving artists. To my opinion the consciousness of the old cultures in sharing their common values, without discrimination and separation, is a big wish of nowadays cultures.

In and with this regard, we can expect that, the research like this one will be guidelines for the improvement of our social and cultural life.

### Conclusion

Two hundred and fourteen (214) cylinder seals with production dates between approximately 3000 BC and 600 BC were examined in the research. Cylinder seals were used in Cyprus and are exhibited in Cyprus Archaeological Museums, British Museum, Metropolitan Museum, John Hopkins and Medelhavs Museum. Among the seals analyzed in terms of figures engraved on them, sixty-seven (67) seals were found to have human or human-bodied figures. These seals were examined by six (6) creativity education experts in order to identify the god and goddess figures engraved on them, which is one of the purposes of the research. Creativity education experts stated that thirty-four (34) of the sixty-seven seals had god or goddess figures on them. The seals, which were determined by creativity education experts to have a god or goddess figure on them, were

examined by three (3) visual arts professionals. From visual arts professionals; the first is 70.58% in twenty-four (24) of thirty-four (34) seals, the second is 61.76% in twenty-one (21) of thirty-four (34) seals, and the third is 79.41% in twenty-seven (27) of thirty-four (34) seals, he stated that there are figures that show definite resemblance to the figures of Levant & Mesopotamian gods and goddess. This high similarity shows that the gods and goddess figures, which are a determinant of religious culture, had a high level of religious relationship between the Levant & Mesopotamian cultures and the Cypriot culture at that time. In line with these views, it was determined which gods&goddess were engraved on the seals in Cyprus.

These gods&goddess; Drinking goddess, Ishara, Ramman-Martu, Aa, Sala, Tarkhu, Sandu, Khaldis, Shamas, Zirbanit, Marduk, Adad, Goddess of agriculture, Archaic seated Deities, Ishtar, Gilgamesh, Eagle-headed god, Siru and Baru-Gula was found to be. It has been determined that these gods and goddess are common gods that exist in the cultures of the Levant and Mesopotamia region, Sumerians, Assyrians, Akkadians, Hittites, Babylonians and Kassites. It has been observed that the seal scrapers of these cultures neighboring Cyprus also engraved similar god and goddess figures on cylinder seals.

The island of Cyprus has been an important center for trade routes in the Eastern Mediterranean. Cylinder seals; They were used to identify individuals, to control production by rulers (king and the like), in barter transactions, and in trade between different groups of people. Cylinder seals, which also function in terms of cultural transfer between neighboring cultures, contributed to the transfer of religious culture between societies.

As a result, it can be said that the god and goddess figures engraved on the cylinder seals used in Cyprus show a high similarity with the Levant & Mesopotamian god and goddess figures.

In this context, it can be stated that the communities formed by the people living in the region between 3000 BC and 600 BC generally communicated in every aspect of culture. Depending on this cultural relationship, the similarities determined in terms of god and goddess figures, which are important in terms of religious culture, show that they have a high level of relationship and interaction in terms of religion.

This research provides insight into the cultural exchange and influence between Cyprus and the Levant & Mesopotamian regions in ancient times, highlighting the importance of understanding and appreciating cultural diversity.

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