

When Their Eyes Speak:

A Study of the Eye Symbol in Mesopotamia

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Abstract: This study discusses the eye in ancient Mesopotamian thoughts, from the religious, linguistic, and artistic points of view and its importance. Where the eye, whether in the literal or figurative definition, was of a great significance in the light of what art reflected from the huge eyes of the statutes or amulets and idol eye statues, which led some researchers to assume the existence of an Eye god in Mesopotamia, which seems to be up for discussion in the light of the modern discoveries

Keywords: Eye, Eye God, eye stone, idol eye.

عندما تتحدث أعينهم: دراسة لرمز العين في بلاد الرافدين

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ملخص: تناقش هذه الدراسة العين في الفكر القديم لبلاد الرافدين من وجهة نظر دينية ولغوية وفنية وأهميتها. حيث كان للعين، سواء بالمعنى الحرفي أو المجازي، أهمية كبيرة في ضوء ما عكسه الفن من تماثيل ذات عيون واسعة وتماثل وتماثيل نذرية، مما دفع بعض الباحثين إلى افتراض وجود إله العين في بلاد النهرين وماحولها وهو الأمر الذي لا يزال مطروحاً للنقاش في ضوء ما يستجد من الاكتشافات الحديثة.

الكلمات الدالة: العين، إله العين، حجر العين، تماثيل العين.

Introduction: In Mesopotamia, the concept of "eye" referred to much more than an organ that enables living creatures to see. The eye was considered to possess certain powers. Such a belief arose early in ancient Mesopotamia so the eye played major symbolic roles and was attributed dual qualities in the very primitive spiritual beliefs of the ancients: the eyes can be good or evil, divine or demonic, protective or destructive. The duality of features associated with the eye caused it to appear in almost all essential religious assignments that reflect the people's beliefs of the period including written texts, sculptures, icons, sacred objects, amulets, and prayers. These early societies give a symbolic meaning to all unusual phenomena, which could give them a reasonable explanation of everything around them.¹

The logical power of the eye rests on being believed pre-eminent among the bodily organs for receiving information and conveying dispositions and feelings. It is considered to be an active organ that conveys and directs toward others the force of emotions that arise internally in the heart/soul. and the emotions and dispositions The

Sumerian language use the term  *igi* to define the eye² while the Akkadian use the term *ênuor inu*³.

The Babylonian indicates the following parts of the eye: eyeball (*gaggultu*), pupil (*libbiêni*, *salmu* [the black part]), the shiny or green of the eye = eye skin (*aruqêni*), the iris (*birnu*), the Eye-lid (*kappu or agappu* = wing of the eye.), eyelashes (*elît and šaplît* = the upper and lower of the eye). The expression *lamassatênâ* means the protective goddess of the eyes, as a part of the eye. It may also mean the pupil or the eyelid.⁴

There was a well-developed vocabulary for both verbs (seeing and looking) in Sumerian and Akkadian:-

a - Sumerian:

  (*igi ...bad*) open the eyes,   (*igi... bar*) look at,   (*igi... dub*) unmg,   (*igi duh*) see,   (*igi.. gid*) look with disfavor,   (*igi ..gub*) see,   (*igi..gal*) look at,   (*igi..gar*) appear,   (*igi...gar*) look at,   (*igihulu*) look with envy ,   (*igiil*) look ,   (*igikar*) examine,   (*igi la*) watch ,   (*igi lib*) awake,   (*igirugu*) oppose,   (*igi sag*) look at with favor,   (*igisaĝ*) choose,    (*igisaĝkizalag bar*) look favorably,   (*igi sig*) see,   (*igisuh*) choose,   (*igi tab*) look at,   (*igi tum*) spy,    (*igi tum la*) spy,   (*igiturgid*) despise.⁵

¹Y. Dilek, "Eski Yakınoĝu'da Göz Sembolizmive Düalizm: Mezopotamya, Mısırve İsrail Tarih Dergisi', *Turkish Journal of History*, 74, (Turkey: 2021): 2.1.

² A. Deimel, *Šumerisches Lexikon* (Rome: Sumptibus Pontificii Institutii biblici, 1947), no798

³ *CAD*.vol 7 (Chicago: Chicago University, 1956):153-158.

⁴ E. Ebling, *Auge, Reallexikon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archaologie.1* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1928), 313-314; P. Dhorme, "l' Emploi Metaphorique des Noms de parties du corps en Hébreu et en Akkadien", *Revue Biblique*", Vol. 30, No. 4, (Pari: Gabalda,1921): 523-530.

⁵ <http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/nepsd-frame.html>. cited.2/2/2022.1:20 AM

b- Akkadian: *amāru, barû, dagālu, hātu, natālu, palāsu* [*naplus*]) covering many aspects as one could find in English: to see, behold; to regard, look at, observe, inspect; to survey, explore, examine; to Gaze. Similarly, those vocabularies were a number of events in Mesopotamian literary and historical texts in which the act of: looking is described or seeing is invited. These events varied from love poetry and heroic epics.¹

The eye in religion (the eye of the god):

In 1953 Riemschneider published a study about the Eye God², the title itself is interesting and makes us pause to consider whether we are fully persuaded that an Eye - God ever existed, in spite of the fact that such god never appears in any text nor depicted in any relief, such god might be supposed to imply a divine being with one huge all-seeing eye, but no such representation of that god. The nearest one can be seen as one of the clay reliefs presenting a cyclops with rays around his head with one single eye in the forehead.(fig.1).³

-The *igi* “eye” was the primary sense for “knowing” in the Sumerian sources. That most complex organ is of greatest importance to humanity and was no less so to the gods, so that the most of the gods are described as seeing or knowing, in Sumerian hymn in the honor of the king Lipit-Ištar. The god An is hailed as one from: "whom none escapes"⁴ means that he is a watcher of what happened in the earth as a god of the sky.⁵

- In Gudea Cylinder B :*igi-an-ku₃-ga-ke₄ / ne-te-ni bi₂-zu*

The eye of holy An, his self was known.⁶

the “*igi-an* = eye of **An**” used as a personal names from several periods, conveying thenotion that the sky-god himself “knows” the named person.⁷

-**Enlil** also is a god whom none can escape:"*i-déil-la-Zu a-ba-ra-è*": (from thy vision who escapes?) in a Sumerian text⁸.

¹ I. Winter. *On Art in the Ancient Near East, Vol. II: From the Third Millennium BC*, (Leiden: Brill, 2010): 436-43

² M. Riemschneider, *Augengott und Heilige Hochzeit*, (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1953), 317-72

³ Riemschneider, *Augengott und Heilige*, 317-72; E. D. Van Buren, *New Evidence concerning an Eye-Divinity Iraq*, Vol.17, No. 2, (London: British Institute for the Study of Iraq.1955), 164; H. Frankfort, *The Art and Architecture of The Ancient Orient*, (Yale: Yale.University Press.1958), pl.58-B.

⁴ H. Zimmern, *König Lipit-Ištar's Vergöttlichung Berichteüber die Verhandlungen der Königl.-SächsischenGesellschaft der Wissenschaften*,; 68. Band, 5. Heft. (Leipzig: Philologisch-Historische Klasse, 1916), 16. col. I. line16

⁵ R. Pettazzoni, *The all-knowing God*, (N.Y: Arno Press, 1978), 77

⁶ D. O. Edzard, *Gudea and His Dynasty. The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Early Periods*, Volume 3/1 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), E3/1.1.7.Cyl B xviii 15-16

⁷ J. N. ZU. Wolfe, *The Life of a Sumerian Verb in Early Mesopotamia*, (LA: University of California, 2015), 205

⁸ S. Langdon, *Sumerian Liturgical Texts* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum, 1917), 171: line15

- Enlil's eyes emphasized: "i-dé-zu nu-kuš-ú": the seeing eyes weary not¹. (Whose lifted eye scans the land).²
- In a hymn to Enlil we read, (how long shall your eyes which see (everything), not rest.³
- One of the seven usual titles of Enlil is: "idedunitene", which means "seeing of himself" "signifying an extraordinary power of sight. (a-a^{dimmer} Mu-ul-lil i-de (NE) gabani (IM)-te-na) the only all seeing one.⁴
- **Enki** (Ea) bore the epithet: *Nin-igi-ku*: "the god with the gleaming eye". The epithet expresses the essential characteristic of the deity, for he was (the god with the holy eye in his forehead).⁵
- Another two gods: **Sin** the god of the moon and **Shamsh**, god of the sun also had eyes to see and look down to the earth by day and by night. The sight power of Sin reflected on sundry personal names like: (*si-ḥa-za-a=sin sees*),⁶ (*sin i-na ma-tim*: Sin is the eye of the land), which means that Sin has the power of seeing all.⁷
- **Shamsh** either was the daytime eye upon the universe. (Shamsh is my eye) (*I-na.shu shamash*. Shamash is his eye),⁸ (*shamash i-na ma-tim*: Shamsh is the eye of the land),⁹ such personal names indicate the sight power of the god; and point that the owners are seeking some kind of insight.
- **Marduk =Bel** in the prayer recited by the *urigallu* the second day of the *akitu* at Babylon occur the words :

BêLinaênê-ku ta-bar-rigim –ri-e-tú
[ina]térêti^{pl}-ka ta-ḥa-tutérêti^{pl}
[ina] ni-kil me-ku ta-nam-din ur-tum

¹ Langdon, *Sumerian Liturgical*, 168. line.1.

² S. N. Kramer, *The Sumerians: Their History & Culture*, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1963), 120/121

³ G. A. Reisner, *Sumerisch-Babylonischehymnennach Thontafeln Griechischer Zeit*, (Berlin: W. Spamm, 1896), no.1.,130, line 46.

⁴ F.A.Vanderburgh, *Sumerian Hymns form texts in the British museum*, (N.Y: University of California Libraries,1908), 77

⁵ Van Buren, *New Evidence concerning an Eye-Divinity*, 169; S. Dalley. *Myths from Mesopotamia Creation, The Flood, Gilgamesh, and Others*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 326; Riemschneider, *Augengott und Heilige*, 13.

⁶ E. Combe, *Histoire du culte de Sin en Babylonie et en Assyrie*, (Paris: Librairie Paul Geuthner, 1908), 147.

⁷ H. Ranke. *Early Babylonian personal names from the published tablets of the so-called Hammurabi dynasty*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1905), 159; Combe, *Histoire du culte de Sin*.141.

⁸ Ranke, *Personal names*, 109.

⁹ Ranke, *Personal names*,145.

"BêL with your eyes seeing all things, [with it] you control the oracle, [with it] you give the law".¹

In the epic of the "Enūmaeliš", Marduk described as: "four were his eyes.... his eyes see everything".²

The eye in literature and mythological texts:

The eye of love and the eye of death or destruction are metaphorical expressions of an act of love, hate, anger, or destruction. The eye is used here metaphorically to reflect it to the recipient.

1-Eye of love, life:

1-1 Enlil&Ninlil:

The mythological text Enlil and Ninlil relates the story of the encounter between Enlil and Ninlil. Enlil in disguise seduces Ninlil who gives birth to the gods Sîn, Nergal, Ninazu, and Ennibilulu. All the preserved OB manuscripts (eighteen) are from Nippur

A-i-bi₂-ku₃-ga-am₃ u₃-mu-un-e i-bi₂-ku[g-ga-am₃] i-bi₂ba-ši-bar-re

(His) eye is bright, the lord's eye is bright, he will look at you!

B-igi-ku₃-ga-am₃lugal-e igi-ku₃-ga-am₃ / igiim-ma-ši-in-bar

(His) eye was bright, the king's eye was bright, he looked at her.

C-kur-gal aia dmu-ul-lil₂ i-bi₂-ku₃-ga-am₃ i-bi₂ba-ši-bar-re

The Great Mountain, Father Enlil – (his) eye was bright, he looked at her.³

1-2- In the myth of the (Ninurta's exploits):

When the mother of the god Ninurta visits him, he looks at her with the eye of life

munus-e šir₃ kug-ge-eš i₃-aĝ₂-ĝe₂₆

^dnin-maḥ-e en ^dnin-urta-ra mu-ni-ib-be₂

igi nam-til₃-la-ka-ni mu-un-ši-in-bar gu₃ mu-na-de₂-e

(The lady divinely performed the song. Ninmaḥ repeated it to Lord Ninurta. He looked at her with his life-giving looks and spoke to her).

1-3- In the myth of Enki&Ninhurage:

^dnin-ḥur-saĝ-ĝa₂-ke₄ mu ^den-ki nam-erim₂ ba-an-tar

i-bi₂ na-am-ti-la en-na ba-ug₅-ge_a gi-a i-bi₂ba-ra-an-bar-ri-en

Ninḥursaĝa condemned the name Enki: "Until his dying day, I will never look upon him with a life-giving eye".⁴

2- Eye of death:

1-2The expression: "the eye of death" (i-bi₂ uš₂-a) appears twice in the story of Inanna's descent into the netherworld. The eye is clearly used to express the action of

¹ F. Thureau-Dangin, *Rituels Accadiens*, (Paris: E. Leroux, 1921), 129-130. line 19-20

² A. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis: The Story of Creation*, (Chicago:University of Chicago Press, 1963), 21, line 95, 22.line 98.

³ M.Viano, "The Reception of Sumerian Literature in the Western Periphery", *Antichistica 9 Studi Orientali* 4, (Rome: Dipartimento Istituto Italiano di Studi Orientali, 2016): 37-38.

⁴ S. N. Kramer & W.F. Albright, "Enki and Ninḥursaĝa: A Sumerian "Paradise" Myth", *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research. Supplementary Studies* No. 1, (Baghdad: New Haven, 1945):18-19. line 215; Th. Jacobsen, *The Harps that Once. Sumerian Poetry in Translation*, (London: Yale University Press, 1987), 201.

vision, while the verb “to die” (uš₂) evidently refers to the effect on the person being looked at. In the first appearance Inanna is the victim after she passes the seven gates, she is brought stark naked and on bended knees before Ereshkigal and the Anunnaki. They bind upon her their eyes of death and she turned into a corpse.¹

167-^d*a-nun-na di-kud 7-bi igi-ni-še₃ di mu-un-da-ku₅-ru-ne*

168-*igi mu-ši-in-bar i-bi₂ uš₂-a-kam*

The Anuna, the seven judges, induced their judgment against her. They looked at her - it was the eye of death.²

-And in the second mention she was the visual perpetrator, killing her husband, Dumuzi, with her eye of death:

-*igi mu-un-ši-in-b^r r igi uš₂-^r-k^r*

-*inim i-ne-ne inimlipiš gig-g^r*

-*gu₃ i-ne-de₂ gu₃n^rm-t^rg-t^rg-g^r*

She looked at him – it was the eye of death

She spoke to him – it was the word of sickness

She yelled at him – it was the yell of damnation".³

2-2-In the myth of **Gilgamsh&Huwawa**, the “eye of death” (*igi uš₂-a-kam*) is also ascribed: *igi mu-ši-in-bar igi uš₂-a-kam*

-if He turns his eye upon one, it was the eye of death.⁴

3-2-The god Enlil, lord of all lands looks to Sumer causing a flood in the Eridu lament. The linguistic expression is formed of the usual “eye” (*i-bi₂*) as a metonym for the act of looking, followed by the verb “to be bad” (*hul*) and the verb “to set aside” (*bar*), which most normally stands together with “eye” to indicate vision. The narrative seems to suggest that the evil eye of Enlil caused the flood that ruined the city, indicating the vision:

u₃-[mu-un]^d mu-ul-lil₂ lugal kur-kur-ra-ke₄

ki-e[n-gi-r]a i-bi₂ hul he₂-en-ši-bar giri₃-bal-a he₂-im-gul?

"[Lord Enlil, king of the lands, looked with an evil eye (*i-bi₂hul bar*) at Sumer, destroying it with a flood.]⁵

¹ Kramer, *The Sumerians*, 154.

² W. R. Sladek, *Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld*, (University Microfilms: Ann Arbor, 1974), 123, lines.167-168

³ Sladek, *Inanna's Descent to the Netherworld*, 147, line. 354-356

⁴ A. George, *The Epic of Gilgamesh, The Babylonian Epic Poem and Other Texts in Akkadian and Sumerian*, (Harmondsworth, Allen Lane: The Penguin Press, 1999), 155.121; M. P. Richey, *Visions of Gods and Monsters: Levantine and Mesopotamian iconographies of divine combat and their textual impressions*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2019), 371.

⁵ M. W. Green, "The Eridu Lament, *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*", Vol. 30, No. 3, (Baltimore: New Haven, 1978): 138. Kirugu 6. Line. 3-4

-The eye moving around inducing chaos and ruin in Eridu may thus be interpreted as the evil eye as an independent thing:

eriduki-gaiginigin -bi ba-kur₂^{su-uh-a} šusùh-a ba-ab-dug₄.

[In Eridu everything was ruined by the evil eye (igi niĝin₂) and turned to chaos.¹

4-2-The same expression is also found in the elegy for Sumer and Urim. In this example the evil eye is referred to the god Enlil:

šag₄ nu-si-siigi niĝin₂-biiri-a ba-an-da-dab₅

He tormented the city with discontentment and an evil eye.

- also The eye of the goddess Ninisina is said to tear the flesh of the enemy:

igi /huš il₂-la-ni erim₂-ma sudar-dar-re

whose angry eye burns the flesh of the enemy.

5-2-the god Enki, by “to lift his eye” (igi il₂), causes an earthquake in the tell of “Enki and the world order”.

11-[^den]-ki igi 1 il₂-la-ni kur cag₄-ge di-di

"Enki, from whom a single glance is enough to unsettle the heart of the mountains".²

6-2- The eye of the **god Ninurta** strikes fear into the heart of his enemies:

[igi] hu-luh-ḥa-zu-ne gu₂-erim₂-ĝal₂ su ḥe₂-em-da-sag₃-ge-de₃

"Your scary eye makes all enemies shake".³

7-2-The angry eyes of goddess Inanna also have scary consequences:

igihuš-a-za he₂-zu-am₃.

igihuš-bi IL₂-IL₂-i-za he₂-zu-am₃.

igi gun₃-gun₃-na-za he₂-zu-am₃.

Of your enraged eye - it is well-known.

Of your raising/bearing its/their enraged eye - it is well-known.

Of your bright eye - it is well-known.⁴

- Iconography:

-Pottery and plaques:

When the origins of the eye symbol are studied, it is observed that one of the earliest samples in a vase found in Hassuna.⁵ (fig.2). While the eyes on the neck of the vase were

¹ Green M.W., *The Eridu Lament*, 132.line.18

² Z. Kotzé, "The Evil Eye of Sumerian Deities", in *Asian and African Studies*, Volume 26, Number 1, (Leiden: Brill, 2017): 112

³ W.H. Römer, *Sumerische 'Königshymnen' der Isin-Zeit*, (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 7.line 18;8

⁴ A. Zgoll, *Der Rechtsfall der En-hedu-Ana im Lied nin-me-šara*. *Alter Orient und Altes Testament* 246, (Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 1997),14.line128-130

⁵ E. Stromenger, *Fünf Jahrtausende Mesopotamien*, (München: Hirmer Verlag, 1962), 375, Fig.1; B. Goff, *Symbols of prehistoric Mesopotamia*, (London: Yale University press, 1963), 5, Fig. 42; B. KOÇ, "the superstitious mystery behind the eye", *journal of history school*, Vol XVIII, (Üniversite Öĝrencilerin Saldırganlık: Kişilerarası Problem Çözme Beceriler, 2014): 13

engraved as a bas relief in an exaggerated way, the united eyebrows, nose and mouth are painted. In another vase, which is found in Uruk and dated back in 4000 B.C., an eye symbol is placed at the shoulders of the vase.¹ (fig.3)

A similar eye symbol is seen in a vase in the period of Jmdet Nasr² (fig.4), however, differing from others in the way that the form of the face is obtained with the eyes which are placed side by side. Compared with the Uruk example, there are more details in the eyes with more structures of the eyelashes.

-The Eye motif appears clearly represented on a piece of pottery from Halaf (under horizontal stripes and rows of arcs in black and red on a whitish surface, a large eye with a center, above it a large arch in red, to the right a second, and above its black arches with loose vertical lines.³

- Several gypsum palettes from Ashur were discovered in 1930. Andrae noted that they must date to the Neolithic. The palettes from Ashur bears eye motifs as found on Mari stele, the eyes, the triangles, and even the navel. Palettes 1 and 2 depict an eye in the upper part (marked by the arrows), and probably a line, circle, and geometric motifs in the lower part.⁴ (fig.6)

- A stele was found in a pit at the temple of Ninhursag, according to Schuhmache⁵ it must represent an artifact from the Early Dynastic I period. The images on the stele of Mari appear in several registers. The upper part with eyes and eyebrows, and a geometric motif on top of them; a zigzag, or herringbone like motif of two panels. Below the eyes and a nose marked by a line and a circle are two horizontal lines of horned animals with a pubic triangle between them. Here again the animals depicted are gazelles, given their zigzag-like horns, slim bodies with long necks and legs. The upper line of images shows trees.⁶ (fig .7)

-Cylinder seals:

The Rhomb or lozenge has usually been considered to be a feminine organ for years. But no one presented a particular explanation for that, and it does not seem to be compatible with the topics that are already carved on seals, and we cannot explain it out of the context of these subjects. Recently the term (eye symbol: eye motif) became more precise when the meaning of the seal was taken into account. In most of the topics, it means that the eyes of the gods will watch and protect the temple herds or hunters or the

¹ Stromenger, *Fünf Jahrtausende Mesopotamien*, 22, Pl VI; Goff, *Symbols of prehistoric*, 116, Fig. 479; Koç, "The superstitious mystery behind the eye", 13

² M. Mallowan, "Excavations at Brak and Chagar Bazar", *Iraq* Vol. 9, (London: British Institute for the Study of Iraq, 1947): 206; Goff, *Symbols of prehistoric*, 94-95, Fig. 346

³ B. İpek, *Figural motifs on Halaf pottery: An iconographical study of late Neolithic society in northern Mesopotamia*, A Master's Thesis, (Ankara: Bilkent University, 2019), 142

⁴ W. Andrae, *Das Wiedererstandene Assur*, (Leipzig: Hinrichs Verlag, 1938), Abb. 31(a-d); N. Getzov & Others, "Iconographic motifs from the 6th-5th millennia B.C. in the Levant and Mesopotamia: Clues for cultural connections and existence of an interaction sphere", *Paléorient*, vol. 42, n2, (Paris: 2016), 143

⁵ T. Schuhmache, "Some reflections about an Alabaster stele from Mari (Syria) and its possible relations to the Western Mediterranean", *Cuadernos De Prehistoria Y Arqueología* 39, 2, (Madrid: Universidad Autónoma, 2013): 7

⁶ Schuhmache, "Some reflections", 7-8; Getzov, "iconographic motifs", 142

king or the worshippers, in fact the eye symbol guaranteed a special presence to the gods.

Riemschneider and Van Buren pointed out that the rhomb whether depicted as detached or linked represents a mysterious Eye god in abstract form. The reason why the linked rhombs were usually in triplicate was that threefold rendering signified (many) and this multiplicity can easily be understood.(fig.8) ¹

From Ur, Tell Asmer, Agrab, khafajh the eye represented as a simple recurring pattern.² Such simple design to eye dominate the late Jemdet Nasr glyptic by the end of the Jemdet Nasr period, (fig.9) this pattern turned into just two eyes that symbolize the eyes of the personal god.³

In the early dynastic period, the eyes pattern turned to be just one eye symbolizing the god leaving more space on the seal for more topics.(fig.10) And the most familiar representation was the one with a horned animal appears running among the bushes and the eye watching it.⁴

The eye symbol continues into the dynastic period to reflect the difference between seals of the prehistorical and historical periods, they reflect the mythological literature of the creation epic and the epic of Gilgamesh with the eye symbol. An unusual seal dating to the early dynastic II period shows the main motif is a human figure portrayed full face with a headdress of plumes. The figure is naked except for a triple girdle around his loins, with a long beard; the face is shown with three eyes, two in the usual place and one in the middle of the forehead. The figure is holding two bulls, one on each side of him. The bulls are rearing on their hind legs. Farther to the left is a lion in a similar pose, with his forepaw held by a human figure similar to the one in the central design. The body of this lion crosses the figure of an antelope. The second human figure, holding the first lion, is about to stab another with a dagger held in the left hand.⁵ (fig.11)

- No further examples have been found till the Kassite period when the eye began to appear once again on seals but the most notable about the Kassite seals is that the eye takes a vertical position and repeated as a pattern in many cases.⁶

¹ Riemschneider, *Augengott und Heilige*, 4; Van Buren, *New Evidence*, 167

² H. Frankfort, "Stratified Cylinder Seals from the Diyala Region", *OIP* 72. (Chicago: Oriental Institute Publications, 1955): nos: 44, 46, 49, 59, 177, 178,179, 188, 211, 347, 376, 454, 842; B. Buchanan, *Early near eastern seal in the yale Babylonian collection*, (Yale university: 1981), nos 156,157; L. Delaporte, "Catalogue des cylindres", *cachets et pierres gravées de style orienté by Musée du Louver II*, (Paris: Musée du Louver, 1923): n.9-10

³ Frankfort, "Stratified Cylinder", 20; nos .179, 347, 376, 833, 842

⁴ L. Legrain, *Seal cylinders*. Ur excavations Vol X. (N.Y: The Carnegie Corporation, 1951), no.76; Frankfort, "Stratified Cylinder", fig 2-3 .23; Buchanan, *Early near eastern seal*, nos. 179,181,182

⁵ E. A. Mackay, *Sumerian palace and the (A) cemetery at Kish*, Mesopotamia part. II, (Chicago: Field Museum Press, 1929), 194, n.8

⁶ W. H. Ward. *The seal cylinders of western Asia*, (D. C., Carnegie Institution, 1910), nos 515, 517, 526, 531, 532, 537, 539; H. Von der Osten, "Ancient Oriental Seals in the Collection of Mr. Edward T. Newell", *OIP*, XXII, (Chicago: Oriental Institute Publications, 1934): nos. 224, 270; H. Von der Osten, "Ancient Near Eastern Seals in the Collection of Mrs. Baldwin", *OIP* 37, (Chicago: *Oriental Institute Publications*, 1936): no 81,83; A. Moortgat, *The art of ancient Mesopotamia*; the classical art of the Near East, (London: Phaidon,1969), pl. H. 5-7

- In the Babylonian and Assyrian periods, the eye began to appear on seals more than before it even appeared in themes like a legendary fight, with winged hybrids, fighting animals, worshippers, and religious symbols.¹ (fig.13)

- Assyrian interesting seal shows Tiamat as a dragon and the upper third of its long rises vertically from two hands, one of which is raised; the rest of the body runs around the bottom of the seal; there are no hind legs. A bearded god (Ninurta) runs along the reptile's body he wears a feather headdress and robe. His arms are stretched out on either side, and in his right hand he holds a six-pronged thunderbolt, below him there is the eye, while in his left he holds two arrows. Behind the god, a smaller bearded god in a horned headdress wears a robe holds a spear before him in both hands. On the tail of the reptile, with her back to the smaller god, stands an even smaller goddess, who wears a feather horned headdress with a necklace and a belted, robe; she holds her arms open to seize the snout of the reptile. The seal may represent a scene from the epic of creation in which the forces of chaos, led by Tiamat, are defeated by a god representing cosmic order, probably Ninurta the representation of the eye here in the epic of creation indicated the value of such a symbol.² (fig.14)

- Another interesting seal with a four-winged hero facing right between two rearing winged bulls (which he grasps the forelegs of), which look back over their shoulders towards a god (Ashur) in a winged disc; above a tall cone formed of rows of drill-holes; between the hero and the bull on the right is an eye. The hero wears a short-sleeved top and a skirt. His wings have two tiers of feathers and the lower pair are longer than the upper. The horned bull's raised foreleg of the bull on the hero seems to be raising a dagger. The winged disc is of the multipartite type.³ (fig.15)

-Statues:

The Tell Asmar (Eshnunna) sculptures are a collection of twelve statues known collectively as the Tell Asmar Hoard, found during 1933-34 at Tell Asmar under a temple devoted to the god Abu. The statues were neatly stacked in an oval pit beside an altar in the sanctuary. Frankfort, who wrote considerably on the subject, indicates that a priest sometimes buried old or badly damaged statues to create space in the temple for their substitutes.

The statues vary in size from 21 cm to 72 cm., the twelve statues found, ten of them are male and two are female. Eight of the sculptures are made from gypsum, two from limestone, and one from alabaster.⁴ All the figures, - except one- are in a standing position. Slim circular bases were used as supports and large wedge-shaped feet provided the larger statues with added durability. The males wear kilts that cover the

¹ Von der Osten, "Newell", nos. 410, 420, 424, 427-28, 431, 432, 439, 441, 444, 446, 475, 484, 479, 554; De Clercq, *Methodiqueet raisonne catalogue antiquities Assyriennes Tome 1. Cylindres Orientaux*, (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1885): Nos. 253, 254, 257, 273, 324, 324, 328, 326, 328, 33, 337; A. Parrot, *Sumer: the dawn of art, (Assyrian art)*, (California: Golden Press, 1961), figs.149, 196, 19, 201, 214, 184 C-E; Ward, *The seal cylinders*, nos. 532, 565, 575, 597, 580, 590, 611, 618, 678, 69, 696, 704,726, 737, 742, 750, 752, 766, 771.

² Ward, *The seal cylinders*, no. 579

³ Word, *The seal cylinders*, 204 .no. 618

⁴ H. Frankfort, "Sculpture of the third millennium B.C from Tell Asmar and Khafajah", *OIP* 44, (Chicago: Oriental Institute Publications, 1939): 57-59

waist and thighs. Their circular arms frame the naked chest, which is partially covered by a black beard. All the males have long hair except only one that is bald- are divided into two symmetrical halves that frame the cheeks and forehead. The large eyes, which are the most impressive stylistic feature that the sculptures in common, are made from inlays of white shell and black limestone; one figure has pupils of lapis lazuli.¹ These materials are affixed to the head with bitumen, which was also used as coloring to provide the beard and hair its distinguishing black color. Both the hair and the clothing, reflect the Sumerian styles of the Early Dynastic Period. Some of the statues are inscribed on the back and bottom with a name, while others simply state "one who offers prayers". Those inscriptions indicate that the statues served as a replacement for male and female worshippers, who desired to leave their devotions with the god.

- The most impressive ones are those for the man and the woman with the abnormally big eyes with round pupils of black inlay.² Both Frankfort and Jacobsen identified those statues as gods representing the god Abu the owner of the sanctuary, while the other female statue represents the mother goddess depending on the symbols carved in front of the base,³ but Moortgat believed that without the horned cap those two figures representing a prince or high priest who had to represent the gods at the cult marriage festival,⁴ and other recent interpretations⁵ believed that these being royal statues that were standing in the presence of the god. Winter comprehended the enlarged eyes of Early Dynastic sculpture as the expression of reaction to an inspiring God, a visible feature effect looks expectantly at the deity with wide eyes, so the statues with huge eyes may be indicating the emotion of awe expressed by the worshipper in the presence of the god.⁶ Although huge eyes are characteristic of the artistic style of this period, it is claimed that these are worshippers and that the abnormal size eyes for some reason might reflect the emotion of awe in eyeing the god. This interpretation differs from that of⁷, who is skeptical about interpreting the eyes "as a reflection of the human body with its physiological functions and the human mind with its emotional responses". There are more to it than style.(fig .16)

-The Early Dynastic III Mari statues also reflect the same feature of the huge staring eyes as tell Asmar's statues which we defined as a particularly south Mesopotamian

¹ Frankfort, *Sculpture*, 57–59

² Frankfort, *Sculpture*, 15, Pls. 1-6; H. Frankfort & T. Jacobsen, "Oriental Institute Discoveries in Iraq, 1933/34: Fourth Preliminary Report of the Iraq Expedition", *OIC*. 19 (Chicago: Oriental Institute Communications, 1935): fig 64-65

³ Th. Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness*, A history of Mesopotamian Religion, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 128; Frankfort & Jacobsen, *Oriental Institute Discoveries*, 55; Frankfort. *Sculpture*, 22

⁴ Moortgat, *The art of ancient Mesopotamia*, 34

⁵ G. Marchesi & N. Marchetti, *Royal Statuary of Early Dynastic Mesopotamia*, (Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2011), 140-141

⁶ Winter, *On Art in the Ancient Near East*, 36

⁷ J. M. Evans, *The Lives of Sumerian Sculpture, An Archaeology of the Early Dynastic Temple*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012). 107

feature, that is what we described as the effect of sovereign's role. Their images from the first glance quite belonging to the south Mesopotamian artistic style, for the ancient features, as well as for the statue general view: their wide eyes, staring, looking to their god. they are bald and beardless, or they feature a long beard falling on the breast, keep their hands folded at the waistline, in the prayer attitude, their dress was the usual kaunakés, with traditional frills, attached at the waist by a belt, these statues belong to kings and officials, the only statue completely preserved, was for Ishqi-Mari's, has a kind of dress, different from the other statues', which in Mesopotamia represents the king in battle with a dress of wool flounces covering one shoulder, and the hair-dress with a chignon on the neck, well known, a common scene represented on Eannatum's Vultures Stele.1 (fig.17)

-Eye idols:

The Eye-Idols were first discovered by M.E.L. Mallowan in 1937-1938 excavations of Tell Brak.²They were found mainly in the Grey Eye-Temple complex; which gained its name from these amazing artifacts found in large numbers within.³There were thousands of those found, but the exact number is unknown. Most of the Eye-Idols were in the precincts of the temple and mixed with filling debris in the temple platform, making it potential that they were votive offerings to an unidentified Eye god.⁴

Eye Idols are almost found at Tell Barak during the Early to Middle Northern Uruk period. Eye-Idols were probably high quality, and served beyond simple functional purposes, carrying significant value and definition. This artifact type is anthropomorphic and abstract in design. The figures have no facial features. They are most commonly from gypsum alabaster or bone. Originally, they were dated to the Jamdat Nasr period,⁵ but that has now been changed to the 4th millennium B.C. because of more current fieldwork.⁶The dating of the Idols has been much discussed, changed, and reassessed overtime via excavations carried out in the 1990s and early 2000s at Tell Barak.(Fig.18)

The familiar shape of the idols consists of an oblong flat body ranging in thickness from three to seven millimeters and is never greater than 13 cm in height. The body tapers towards the top into a long neck crowned by a pair of eyes and eye brows. Originally, the eyes must have been in filled with pigment for in certain examples, light traces of black, red, or green stayed. Some examples seem to have had black painted bodies, but those were rare. The four-eyed figurines were represented couples;

¹ A. Parrot, *Mission Archéologique de Mari, Vol III .Les Temples D' Ishtaratet de Ninni-Zaza*, (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1966): pls XII-LII; F. Pinnock, *The image of power at Mari between east and west*. Syria supplement 2, (Paris: Presses de l' Ifpo, 2014), 676

² Mallowan, "Excavations at Brak and Chagar Bazar", 1-2

³ G. Emberling, "Political Control in the Early State: The Eye Temple and the Uruk Expansion in Northern Mesopotamia", of *Pots and Plans: Papers of the Archaeology and History of Mesopotamia and Syria presented to D. Oates in Honor of his 75th Birthday* (London: Nabu Publications.2002), 4

⁴ Mallowan, "Excavations at Brak and Chagar Bazar", 32

⁵ Mallowan, "Excavations at Brak and ChagarBazar", 33-32.

⁶ J. Oates, "The Reattribution of Middle Uruk Materials at Brak. In *Leaving No Stones Unturned": Essays of the Ancient Near East and Egypt in Honor of Donald P. Hanse*, (Winona lake: Ind. Eisenbrauns, 2002), 144-147

sometimes a smaller figure is traced in front of the body of a larger model as if to suggest a mother and child, and there are examples with three or six eyes supposed to represent a triad.¹

These artifacts were discovered in small numbers at another nearby site of Tell Hamoukar, so their division can only be traced to just these two sites, with the largest collection coming from Tell Barak.²

The Eye-Idols are intentionally abstract and simple in their representation of what is a likely human form, as there is vast archaeological evidence in Mesopotamia from the Late Chalcolithic and into the Uruk period that suggests the artistic ability to produce detailed models of the human form. Thus, it is highly possible that the intentional parts of the Eye-Idols are believed to be initial; it was the decision of the artist to create clear-cut and simplistic chest designs, as well as stressing the single or numerous sets of eyes, this feature was the point of focus. The Eye-Idols are certainly anthropomorphic.³

Mallowan offered several possible alternative meanings of the eye idols. As follows:

- 1-They were benevolent and protective eyes, magical eyes devoted in the temple itself to the god of Barak who specialized in healing illnesses of the eyes.
- 2-They represented the character of the individual dedicator, or indicated the dedicator projecting himself via the image of the deity.
- 3-They were abstract symbols of some divinity, or were carved after the image and likeness of the divinity to whom they were dedicated.
- 4-This divinity if it was not the mother goddess herself must have the same powers of reproduction force.⁴

There have been several suggestions of specific deities that might have been associated with the Eye Idols such as Ninhursag, Ishtar, Inanna or an unknown divinity represented by the stylized symbol of the eye, but without further conclusive knowledge this aspect of the debate must remain open. The best conclusion is that the Eye-Idols are directly related to a deity or deities that are linked with the eye, literally or figuratively, embodying aspects of omnipotence and being protected and watched over.⁵

There were also a number of other forms clearly related to the Eye-idols these were, **The Spectacle eye Idol** (*brillenidols*) that was found before the Eye-Idols were excavated in 1937-1938, and their existence in the publications has connected with the Eye-Idols and they were the origin for many explanations of the Eye-Idols. Spectacle Idols are visually like Eye-Idols but are simpler in design and material, and structurally are different. They have been found mainly at the sites of Ur, Uruk, Tepe

¹ Mallowan, "Excavations at Brak and Chagar Bazar", 150; Van Buren, *New Evidence*, 165

² Emberling, "Political Control", 82.

³ A. Cooper, *The Eyes Have It -Study of the Tell Brak Eye Idols in the 4th Millennium BCE: with a primary focus on function and meaning*, (Sydney: University of Sydney, 2016), 30.

⁴ Mallowan , "Excavations at Brak and Chagar Bazar", 151-56; Van Buren, *New Evidence*, 165

⁵ Cooper, *The Eyes Have It*, 84

Gawra,¹ Khafajah, Hamoukar, Tell Barak & Diyala. The artifact type is wider sparse geographically, but they are found in fewer numbers in comparison to the Eye-Idol artifact type. They are also found in a wider area of houses and temples compared with Eye-Idols. Both artifacts also generally date from the early to middle Northern Urukperiod, they are often explored together or classed as the same artifact.² (fig.19)

-The eye stone:

The eye stone was a “beads resembling an eye, or pair of eyes”, as well as “pieces of onyx or agate, which resembled an eye or a pair of eyes”. They were known in the Akkadian periods but most of those which have been found belonged to the Kassite and Neo-Assyrian periods.

The function of these objects is still up for argument, some archeologists suggested that it was a dress decoration and others thought that they see it in the garment of a statue of Adad, but Lambert thought that neither their shape nor their colors were suitable for such use. More generally it has been supposed that these eyes were set in the eye sockets of divine statues,³ but such suggestion does not conform to the fact that some of them has two holes on both sides as if it were hanging, which is incompatible with their use as eyes of statues while compatible with the possibility of being amulets.

Two important passages one of them from Kassite period, dated in the fifth year of Nazimaruttas for a Lamaštu ritual.

7 inātiabanpár-rum adi 1 luli da-ni-tum iḫ-zu (ḫuraši)

7 eyes of parrum stone with 1 lulidanitum set in gold.

6 inātiabanpár-rum šihrāti la iḫ-zu.

6 little eyes of parrum stone not set.

4 inātiabanmušgarriiḫ-zuḫuraši.

4 eyes of agate set in gold.⁴

The use of (eyes) here in groups makes it hard to believe that it was a royal votive and was available in such numbers for this use in the other passage. From the Akkadian Descent of Ištar, the eye stone is mentioned twice:

[n]a⁴ ināte^{II.meš.le} ma-la-a bir -k[a-a-šá]

Her lap full of eye-stones (CT.15,47, rev.52=48 27)

[n]a⁴ ināte^{II.meš.le} sa un-dal-la-a GARZA[...]

She filled. [...] with her eye stone (CT.15,47.rev 54=48 29).⁵ With this line, we could believe that they were votive offerings or amulets possessing a special protection power.

¹ A. J. Tobler. *Excavations at Tepe Gawra*, Vol II, Levels IX-XX, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1950), pl LXXXVI

² Mallowan, "Excavations at Brak and Chagar Bazar", 34; Cooper, *The Eyes Have It*, 34-35

³ W. G. Lambert, "An eye-stone of Esarhaddon's Queen and other similar gems", *Revue d' Assyriologie et d' archéologie orientale*, Vol. 63, No. 1, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1969): 70

⁴ S. Langdon, "The eyes of Ningal", *Revue d' Assyriologie et d'Archéologie Orientale*, vol. 20, no.1, (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1923), 11.

⁵ Lambert, "An eye-stone of Esarhaddon's Queen", 70-71.

The majority of these stones bear royal names. It seems that the rulers began to carve short inscriptions on such stones, dedicating them to the gods. Some eyestones are drilled through the side with a hole allowing the beads to be strung, may be as a part of jewelry. Whatever the use of these stones, it is clear that their eye-like appearance was an important and powerful part of their meaning. The inscribed eyestones, some of which were dedicated “for the life” of the individuals, reflect the desire to be under the eyewash of the gods. The kind eye of the gods was especially important to kings, who depended on divine protection for a successful and long-lasting reign.

A good example is from the Louvre Museum AO.11206 found in the temple of Enlil at Nippur from the Kassite period made of agate with black-brown and white color with inscription:

^d*en.lil lugal.a.ni.(ir) [ku-ri]-gal-(zu) (in.na.ba)*

toEnlil his Lord Kuurigalzu gave (this).¹

Another remarkable unique pair of eye stones -instead of one- of onyx in the Ashmolean Museum. AN.1922.293 (fig.20) worked out of a piece of onyx in layers of three colors, dark brown, white, and light ochrous brown, and executed in such manner that the human eyes with light brown pupils the eyes, made by the Babylonian king Abi-ešuh, in the back of the eyes as Sumerian inscription:

Ana ⁶*Ningal tas-(rih?)-tu(?) aššuri-tišima.*

To Ningal the shining light? The Assyrian (Ningal); O hear).²

Miscellaneous:

From UR in the Early Dynastic period, the Eye was represented on gaming boards from the royal cemetery, the arrangement of the decorated squares on these gaming boards, two of three complete squares with the designs of Eye are adjoining to the squares bearing designs of the eight-rosette,³ directly it will be identified that the eight-rosette was a common theme of decoration on the sanctuary walls of Jamdat Nasr period and the sanctuary of Barak Eye –temple, copper paneling with an impressed eye design also overlaid the walls. (fig.21) and it may be noted that on one of the UR gaming boards we have a design imitating the mosaic cone-decoration which is also a well-known feature in the shrines of the Jamdet Nasr period (the purpose of the game may be to see who could reach the sanctuary first and some of the designs on the squares stood for obstructions in the contest).⁴ Thus, the eye design may have some magical significance and was belonging to the temple and gods.

¹ Lambert, "An eye-stone of Esarhaddon's Queen", 67

² Langdon, "The eyes of Ningal", 9

³ C. L., Woolley, *Ur Excavations, The Royal Cemetery*, vol.2, (London: The British Museum press, 1934), pl. 95-96

⁴ Mallowen, "Excavations at Barak and Chagar Bazar", 206

- Riemschneider believes like many other researchers that the gaming-boards were used for purposes of divination, the future good or evil fortune by the enquirer being foretold by the fall of the dice.¹

In the royal cemetery of UR the Eye design figures also on other objects in the tombs,² are stamped on the collar of the asses which draw the chariot in Shub-ad's tomb; and on the front of a lyre, and engraved on a wooden box.³

The evil eye:

The Evil Eye belief is one of the oldest and most widely-spread instances of ancient popular culture. It has been found throughout the areas of the ancient Near East.⁴

The Akkadian term 'inulemtu for "evil eye" is considered to represent the meaning of Sumerian *igiĥuI*, in all instances. This hypothesis is dominant in spite of the fact that Akkadian scribes themselves often translated otherwise.⁵

The belief in the effect of the evil eye is based on the one hand on the experience that certain people's gaze seems to be captivating and on the other hand on the fear of abnormal eyes. The power attributed to the evil eye was quite great in Sumerian text⁶describes them as follows:

1. *igiád-girigilû-gálád-gir*
2. *igigalunig-ĥûil-dim-ma ád-gîr*
3. *an-e ba-teginiir nu-seg-segki-bateg
u-bil nu mǎ-di*
4. *gud-de ba-teg sab-bi im-duĥ*
5. *é-tùr-riba-tegga-tab-ba-bi-immutaĥ*
6. *amas-suba-teg gin-bi im -lam*
7. *bǎr-raba-teg a-kalaguku mu-[un]-an-sar*
8. *ki-el-raba-tegtug ,nu-un-an-kar*

“It (the evil eye) draws near to heaven and does not let the wind rain. It approaches the earth and does not let the fresh herb sprout. It approaches the ox and separates the shepherd (from him). It approaches the stable and leaves the ... Milk does not become plentiful It approaches the dwellings and binds the strength of the people. It approaches the girl and takes her dress away”.⁷

¹ Riemschneider, *Augengott und Heilige*, 188-9, 195, 205

² Woolley, *The Royal Cemetery*, pl 39

³ Mallowen, "Excavations at Brak and Chagar Bazar", 206.

⁴ J. H. Elliott, *Beware the Evil Eye. The Evil Eye in the Bible and the Ancient World*, Vol 1, (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2015), 82

⁵ M. J. Geller. "Paranoia, the Evil Eye, and the Face of Evil", *In Literatur, Politik und Recht in Mesopotamien*, (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2003), 117.

⁶ Langdon, *Babylonian liturgies*, 11.

⁷ Langdon, *Babylonian liturgies*, 11; Thomsen, "The Evil Eye", 23.

-In Sumer-Akkadian incantations¹ "the 'evil eye' is introduced acting independently of its owner and, sometimes hypostatized, as a 'monster' or an animal."²

igimuš.hušigi lù.ulu₃ muš.huš

igilùnig.hul dim.ma muš.huš

the eye (is) a dragon, the eye of the man (is) a dragon,

the eye of the evil man (is) a dragon.³

Incantations mentioning the Evil Eye provide the chief source of explicit evidence of Evil Eye belief and practice in ancient Mesopotamia. A clear mention of the Evil Eye emerges from the early dynastic period, as an example in a line from the Instructions of Suruppak "With your eyes (igi), do not do evil". However, no incantations directed against it are known until the Babylonian period. The complete catalogue of the so-called Evil-Eye incantations known to the present writer is as follows:

Old Babylonian Sumerian

-Edin.1909.405.33.4

-AO 8895.⁵

- YBC 4622.⁶

- YBC 5632⁷

- Sb 12353.⁸

-H 97(MA),H179(MB).⁹

Bilinguals:

STT 179.

RM219-BM98497.¹⁰

BM122624.¹¹

¹ Thomse, "The Evil Eye", 22-25.

² J. N. Ford, "Ninety-nine by the evil eye and one from natural causes": KTU2 1.96 *in its near eastern context. In Ugarit-Forschungen*, Vol. 30, (Manfried Dietrich: Oswald Loretz, 1983), 211.

³ TCL 16.98:1-2; BL.no.3,1-3; Thomse, "The Evil Eye", 25

⁴ Langdon, *Babylonian Liturgies*.3; E. Ebeling, "Beschwörungengegen den Feind und den bösen Blickausdem Zwei-stromlande." *Archiv Orientalni* 17/1, (Prague: 1949): No.8; Thomsen, "The Evil Eye", 26

⁵ TCL16.89; Ebleing, "Beschwörungen", No. 7; Thomsen, "The Evil Eye", 31f.

⁶ YOS11.70; Thomsen, "The Evil Eye", 28-31.

⁷ YOS 11.71; Thomsen, "The Evil Eye", 25

⁸ A. Cavigneaux, & F. N Al- Rawi, "Textesmagiques de Tell Haddad (Textes de Tell Haddad II)", *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und verwandte Gebiete*, ZA 83, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1993): 179f ;CT.17.33; STT.179

⁹ Cavigneaux, "Textesmagiques", 197f

¹⁰ CT 17.33

¹¹ CT 17.33

BM93081.¹

Old Babylonian Akkadian:

BM 122691.²

1M 90648.³

Neo-Assyrian Akkadian:

VAT 10018.⁴

VAT 14226.⁵ partially duplicates from VAT 10018.⁶

Such incantations contain a ritual involving moving the Evil Eye's harmful effect to a sheep; the sheep and the evil are then eliminated. Other examples of such transfer are provided in Old Babylonian incantations, with one Sumerian incantation, for example, directing to the transfer of the Evil Eye's effect to animal hair, and another to a goat. Also, there is a text with rituals involving a libation of beer, prayer, a threefold repetition, and an incense burner. The ritual is to insure that "the Evil Eye shall not (approach) the man".⁷ In another ritual⁸ Enki cures the person afflicted by the Evil Eye by wiping his body with bread. To keep the Evil Eye at bay, the seed of the allumzu plant and juniper oil were prescribed.⁹

The amulets were one of the means of defense against the evil eye. The Berlin Museum has a lot of replicas of hands with outstretched arms and Fake lapis lazuli fingers. With this amulet works the blue color as a protector against it.¹⁰

Contenau also mentioned models of what he calls the "horned hand" (*manocornuta*) and the "fig hand" (*manofica*), which included hands with outstretched fingers and the colors red and blue.¹¹ The use of those colors to frustrate the Evil Eye. The pronounced blue eyes on numerous Mesopotamian statues and jewelry may also be evidence of protection employed against the Evil Eye. Mesopotamians also believed that the color red was effective in frightening demons and hostile spirits.

¹ CT 17.33

² W. Farber, "Zur älteren akkadischen Beschwörungsliteratur", *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und verwandte Gebiete ZA* 71, (Berlin: 1981): 61

³ A. Cavigneaux, A., et Al-Rawi F.N.H., "Charmes de Sippar et de Nippur", fs. De Meyer, (1994): Seal no.7105

⁴ Ebeling, *Beschwörungen*, No.6; Thomsen, "The Evil Eye", 24-26.

⁵ Ebeling, *Beschwörungen*, No.6; Thomsen, "The Evil Eye", 24-26,

⁶ Geller, "Paranoia, the Evil Eye, and the Face of Evil", 116

⁷ *BAM.374* obverse, 3–8

⁸ CT 17. 33:11–14

⁹ *BAM* 1, 60; Thomsen, "The Evil Eye", 27.

¹⁰ E. Ebling. *Blick, Böser*, In *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, 2:55. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1938), 55.

¹¹ G. Contenau, *La magie chez les Assyriens et les Babyloniens*, (Paris: Pavot1, 947), 244.

Conclusion:

The wide staring eyes of Sumerian votive statues, the dozens of amulets, eye stones and Eye-Idols indicate that the eye was not just an organ of vision, in such primitive beliefs but also a means of communication with that mysterious god who sees all. The duality description of the eye is very clear in literary and religious texts, that describe the eye once as the eye of life and again as the eye of death or destruction, such duality in the treatment of the same symbol could reflect the importance of this symbol.

It had the power and ability to change the course of cosmic events even though its appearance of them on Ur gaming boards is not translated as a purely decorative element, but rather gives a larger and more complex interpretation of these pieces.

Figures



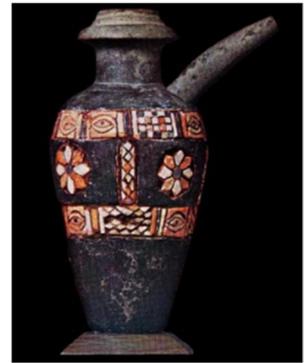
(Fig .1)

Frankfort, *The Art*, pl.58-B



(Fig .2)

Parrot, *Sumer*, fig. 63



(fig 3)

KOÇ, "the superstitious", 33, fig .2

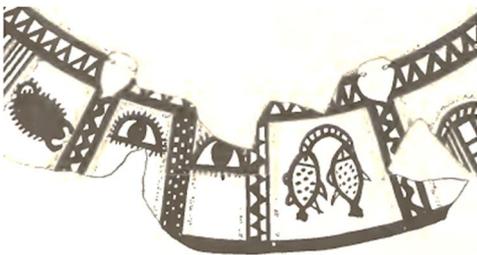
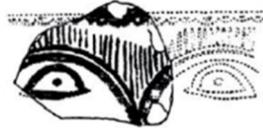


Fig. 346 Polychrome Jemdet Nasr Ware; Jemdet Nasr

Fig. (4) Goff, *Symbols of prehistoric*, fig 346



11a



11b

Fig. (5) İpek, *figural motifs*, fig. 58

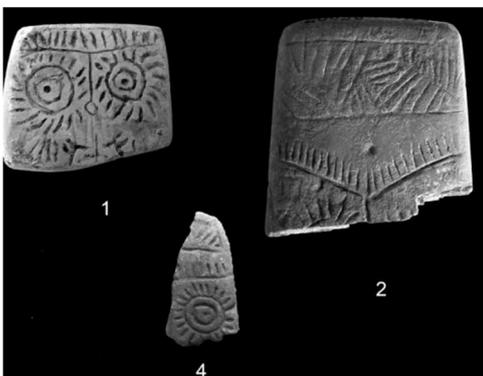


Fig. (6) Getzov, "iconographic motifs", fig. 11



fig. (7) Schuhmache:"Some reflections":fig.1

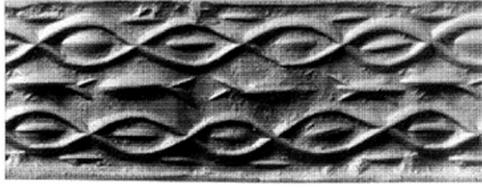


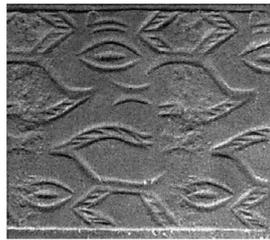
Fig. (8)

Buchanan, *Early near eastern seal*, n.157

Frankfort, "Stratified Cylinder", n.59 -78



(fig. 9) Frankfort, "Stratified Cylinder", fig. 59-97-347



(fig .10)

Legrain, *Seal cylinders*, fig 76

Frankfort, "Stratified Cylinder", fig 2-3



Fig. (11) Mackay, *A Sumerian palace*, pl. XLI. n.8



Fig. (12)

Ward, *The seal*, n. 515

V on der Osten, *Mrs. Baldwin* no.8

Moortgat, *The art*, pl.H-5



Parrot:1961: fig193-196



Fig. (13) Parrot, *Sumer*, figs. 197-201-214



410



254

Fig. (14)

Von der Osten: *Newell*, no.410

De Clercq, *catalogue*, Nos. 253, 254.



579



618

Fig. (15) Ward, *The seal cylinders*, no.579-618

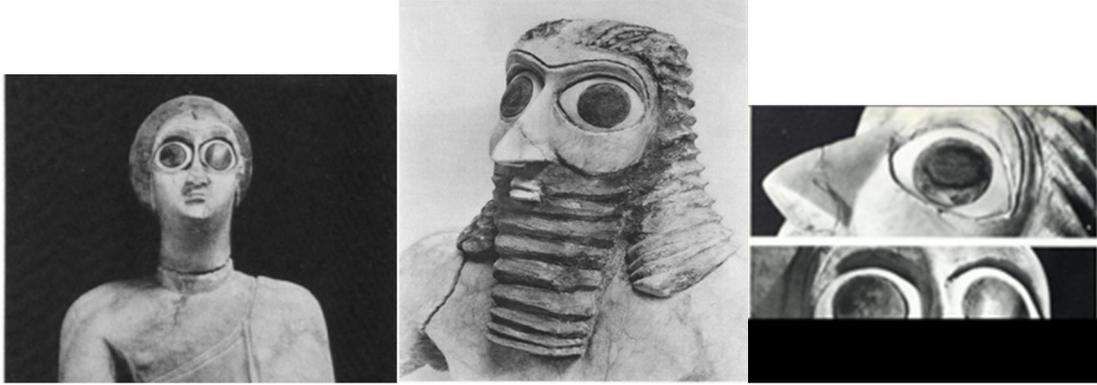
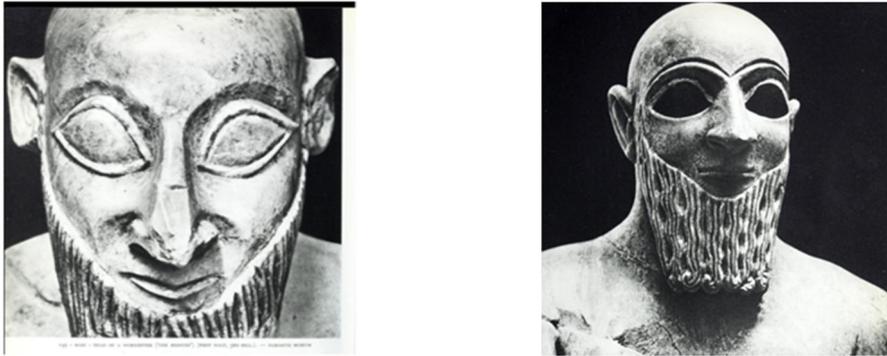


Fig. (16)

Frankfort, *Sculpture*, pl. 2-4; parrot, *Sumer*, figs 135-136



(Fig.17)

Parrot, *Sumer*, figs148-149



(Fig. 18)

Cooper, *Tell Brak Eye*, (1.3-1.5); (2.1-2.3)



(Fig. 19)

Cooper, *Tell Brak Eye*, fig 4.10



(fig. 20) Ashmolean Museum. AN1922.293

https://collections.ashmolean.org/collection/search/per_page/25/offset/0/sort_by/relevance/object/79686



(Fig. 21)

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/350710812_Board_Games_Before_Ur

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I- Abbreviation:

- BAM (aka Köcher Medizin): F. Köcher, *Die babylonisch-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen* (Berlin: 1963 ff.)
- BL: Langdon, S., *Babylonian Liturgies*; coll. R. Borger. Paris: 1913.
- CT: Cuneiform Texts from Babylonian Tablets in the British Museum (London: 1896)
- STT: O. Gurney/J. Finkelstein, *the Sultan-Tepe Tablets, I/II* (London: 1957/1964)
- TCL: Textes cunéiformes, Musées du Louvre (Paris: 1910 ff.)
- YOS: Yale Oriental Series, Babylonian Texts (New Haven: 1915 ff.)

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