



## ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

# Why No One Could Have Read the Inscriptions on the Statue of Idrimi (and Why That Was the Point)

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## Abstract

The Statue of Idrimi, from Late Bronze Alalah, is inscribed with two inscriptions totaling 103 lines that are notorious among Assyriologists for being difficult to read because of the multiplicity of unusual sign forms and rampant paleographic variation. In the first half of this paper, my method is to explore paleographic variation horizontally and vertically across the larger inscription. I also highlight several places on the statue where the inscription is simply not accessible to a reader. As a result, I argue that the inscriptions would have been extremely difficult and, in some places, outright impossible to read in antiquity as well. Furthermore, this difficulty was, in fact, intentional and part of a larger rhetorical program. The paper concludes with some final speculations as to how an ancient audience might nonetheless have been familiar with story of Idrimi's life that was inscribed on the statue.

## Keywords

Idrimi, Alalah, Inscriptions, Paleography, Audience

## Session

4. The materiality of inscribed and figurative objects

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## Type of paper

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