



STATE ARCHIVES OF ASSYRIA

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Sealings

The texts of this group are a small sample of a very large documentary category, called "sealings," but at times referred to as "bullae": pieces or lumps of clay, of oblong or circular shape, bearing the impression of a stamp

seal, and used to secure a knot or to hold fast a container of sorts. The fact that many objects shipped or transferred within the NA empire were sealed, is supported both by the many hundreds of extant sealings, official or private (cf. Herbordt, SAAS 1. *passim*) and by textual information regarding shipments (cf. e.g. SAA 1 51. gold; SAA 5 206, tunics; SAA 10 210, fingernail cuttings of the king for magic purposes).

As used here, the term "sealing" (which is at times replaced by "docket"; cf. TCAE, p. 19 and n. 1) refers only to the inscribed exemplars of the category. As a textual genre its uniqueness lies, of course, in the fact of being, by and large, a mere "script" accompanying an "act": i.e. an occasional addition to the two essential administrative actions of securing a specific contents by means of the clay and sanctioning such a measure through the impression of the seal. Of course, a written text on the clay sealing would also seem to have had the effect of adding security against any unauthorized opening of the "package" or any tampering with the goods (cf. on this count e.g. SAA 10 348, a letter by Mar-Issar to Esarhaddon certifying that he has received jewelry from the king "with the seal intact," NA. KIŠIB *šalmu*).

This said, each specimen may yield a more precise picture of its function not only through the inscription itself — where the contents, the administrative occasion and often the date of the sealing may be indicated — but also from a study of the markings of string or other objects left on the clay, when present, which may provide a clue as to the nature of the container. The seal impression itself is, of course, also a factor to be reckoned with — although in general this material appears to bear the standard Assyrian royal seal, and sports only quite rarely seals of specific individuals (cf. Herbordt, SAAS 1, Abb. 7-11, Taf. 33-36). In a survey of the available material from all points of view, including the inscribed sealings from Calah, Herbordt has recently brought forth a functional classification of the NA sealings (SAAS 1, pp. 53ff) from which the following division of our material is drawn:

1) sealings attached directly to bales or bundles, or tags attached to the wrappings by a string. This case — the most frequent among the unscribed sealings from Nineveh — would seem to apply only to two laconic documents, no. 59 and no. 60, in which the provenience of unspecified goods is given; similar brief messages are also attached to four sealings from Khorsabad, nos. 61-64.

2) sealings attached to sacks, discernible as such by the cloth marks on the clay of the reverse. This case applies to six silver shipments, nos. 50-54, and no. 57, all of which have texts indicating their ultimate provenance — from a specific place, i.e. Ekron, Judaea, Kumme, Hassutu or from an official or other individual. The sealing of the sacks could have taken place directly upon arrival from abroad or just before storage; notice, in any case, that all recorded shipments amount to one talent (possibly the "light" talent of 30.3 kilograms in all cases, as clearly specified in no. 50), and thus were probably the result of a subdivision of the original quantities by a standard measure — and one which a well-woven sack could hold. The inscribed exemplars are about one-half of the (quite limited) number of these particular sealings from Nineveh.

3) sealings attached to jar necks. Following Herbordt (SAAS 1, pp. 59-60), two inscribed sealings out of a total of 27 for Nineveh pertain to this group:

no. 55, a contribution of unspecified provenance relevant to "one talent, 2 minas of ...": apart from the slight variance in weight on the cases of group 2), should we imagine 31-plus kilos of silver stashed in a jar? The second sealing, no. 72, bears a note on a "completed account ...," which recalls the (exactly opposite) administrative formula on an olive-shaped sealing from Calah, GPA 256, on sheep and goats, "...incomplete accounts." It is thus clear that the formula has nothing to do with the type of sealing and the relevant container (*pace* Herbordt, p. 60); and in the present case, in view of the jar neck, the object of the "accounts" could have been grain or a liquid substance.

4) sealings applied to a further document bearing a list. In the case of particular items which could not be sealed directly — such as the items of remitted *ilku*-service in no. 49, the various pieces of furniture in no. 65, the bowls of wine in no. 66, the cloaks and other garments in no. 67, the 14 horses ready for the butcher in no. 68, and the group of deportees in no. 69 — the sealing was applied to a further tablet, scroll, or wooden waxed writing-board. A scroll might have been present in the case of no. 69, since the reverse shows an impression of "string and a rounded object" (TCAE, p. 20). The wooden writing board, *lā'u* — as described e.g. in SAA 1 99 and SAA 1 128, regarding lists of deportees — might have instead been present in nos. 49, 65, 66, 70, and 73, where impressions of a wooden surface are visible on the clay of the reverse. However, the same impressions could derive from the direct application of a clay sealing to a wooden box as well; and it is possible that this was indeed the case for no. 71, where a twice-repeated message indicates "letters" as the content. Further specimens from Calah (ND 3413, on incoming *ilku*-dues from the time of Shalmaneser III, on "king's men" which had been reviewed, etc., cf. TCAE, pp. 20ff, TFS 21-23) might also belong to this broad general category; but it is doubtful that a closer characterization of the accompanying documents may be found.

5) sealings applied to a wooden knob. This type, which may be set apart from the others due to the strongly concave surface of the reverse, is represented by two exemplars from Nineveh. One of the two is no. 56: the inscription ("1 talent of silver, of Nabû-gabbu-le'i") makes it clear that the container was a wooden box of sorts, of which the knob — surrounded by leather bands or string — was part. Herbordt (SAAS 1, p. 64) adds a number of exemplars from Nimrud, GPA 233-237, to this group, although the inscriptions here (of the type "PN₁, care/charge of PN₂") are hardly illuminating as regards the exact contents of the knobbed box.

Many of the sealings bear dates. A number belong to the reign of Sargon: no. 65 (719 BC, i.e. the eponymy of Sargon himself), no. 68 (717), no. 49 (715), and no. 69 (713). Surprisingly enough, on the other hand, we have four sealings dated to the reign of Sennacherib: nos. 50 (699), 51, 53, and 54 (695). The two kings might also be entitled to share the two fragmentary dates, no. 70 (= 721 or 711 BC, cf. discussion in app. crit.), and no. 52, which according to Postgate might refer to 682 BC, on the basis of a professional designation attested in Aramaic (cf. Fales Epigraphs, pp. 135ff). Other chronological indicators derive from the findspot of the documents: texts nos. 61-64 were found in Dur-Šarruken, and thus may be referred to Sargon's reign. Whether the lack of any inscribed sealings for the reigns of Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal is due to the ever-convenient chance element in discovery,

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or to a historical factor of sorts, is hard to say at present (the Calah exemplars are undated — except for the Shalmaneser exemplar mentioned above, and ND 807, which goes back to 716 BC!).



FIG. 7. *Royal seal impression (reign of Sargon II).*

Cf. no. 49.

Sm 2276

49. Sealing Accompanying Items sent to the Governor by Sargon

Sm 2276

- 1 *il-ku ša* ^mMAN¹—GI.NA MAN KUR—*a[š-šur]*
a-na LÚ.EN.NAM *i-ri-'mu¹-u-ni* ITI.AB UD-
 25-KAM
 2 *lim-mu* ^mtak-lak—*a-na*—EN

ADD 766

¹ State service which Sargon, king of A[ssyria], remitted to the provincial governor. Month of Kanun (X), 25th day, eponym year of Taklak-ana-Bel (715 B.C.).

50. From a Shipment of Silver from Ekron

Th 1905-4-9,54 (= BM 98548)

- 1 1 GÚ *ina* QÀL-si *ša* MAN ^mpi-di-'i¹
 2 KUR.an-qar-u-na-a-a ITI.APIN UD-23
 3 *lim-me* ^mEN—MAN-a-ni

Iraq 27 p. 16 no. 21

¹ 1 talent (of silver measured) by the royal light (talent). Pidī, the ruler of Ekron.
² Month of Arahšamna (VIII), 23rd day, eponym year of Bel-šarrani (699 B.C.).

51. From a Shipment of Silver from Arbela

Th 1905-4-9,58 (= BM 98552)

- 1 1 GÚ *ša* GIŠ.SAR URU.arba²-il²
 2 ITI.AB UD-4²-KAM
 3 *lim-mu* ^maš-šur—^U—PAB

Iraq 27 p. 16 no. 22

¹ 1 talent (of silver) of the orchard of Arbela.
² Month of Kanun (X), 4th day, eponym year of Aššur-bel-ušur (695 B.C.).

52. From a Shipment of Silver from the Wine Master

81-2-4,350

- 1 1 GÚ KU[G².UD *x x x*]
 2 ^mPA—PAB.M[*EŠ²—x x*]
 3 GAL—GEŠTIN [*x x*]
 4 ITI.ZÍZ UD-10-[KAM *lim-mu* ^m*x x x*]
 5 GAL—SAG

Iraq 27 p. 16 no. 35

¹ 1 talent of *sil[ver ...]* Nabû-ahhe-[...], wine master [...].
⁴ Month of Shebat (XI), 10[th] day, [eponym year of NN], chief eunuch.

49 Copy also Winckler, *Sargon* I, 196. Photo: Iraq 15 (1953) Pl. 18/4 (= SAAS 1 Taf. 36/5). Previous edition: TCAE p. 70 1.19.2.

50 Iraq 15 (1953) 169 No. 21. Copy: Iraq 27 (1967) 16 No. 21. Photo: Iraq 15 (1953) Pl. 19/1. Previous edition: TCAE p. 21 7.2.6.

51 Iraq 15 (1953) 169 No. 22. Copy: Iraq 27 (1967) 16 No. 22. Photo: Iraq 15 (1953) Pl. 19/2. Previous edition: TCAE p. 21 7.2.7.

52 Iraq 15 (1953) 170 No. 35. Copy: Iraq 27 (1967) 16 No. 35. Previous edition: TCAE p. 22 7.2.10.

65. Accompanying Furniture

K 3781a

- 1 [ur²]-su-tú GIŠ¹.MES¹-kan¹-ni ša GİR.2.
MEŠ-ša KUD 1.en GIŠ.NÁ EN GIŠ.DA¹-šá GİR.
2.MEŠ-šá
2 GIŠ.[NÁ²] EN GIŠ.DA¹-šá GIŠ.BANŠUR¹ MES¹-
kan-nu TUR KAŠ.LUL 5 GIŠ.GU.ZA ina IGI
^mba-a-a-i
3 ITI.GUD UD-10-KAM
4 lim-me ^mMAN—GIN

ADD 767

- ¹ [A] ... of sissoo-wood, whose feet are cut. One bed with its board (and) its feet.
² A [bed] with its board. A table of sissoo-wood, small, (for) drink-dispensing. 5 chairs: at the disposal of Bayi.
³ Month of Iyyar (II), 10th day, eponym year of Sargon (719 B.C.).

66. Accompanying Bowls

51-9-2,446 (BM 84876) + BM 136986

- 1 DUG.ŠAB.M[EŠ x x LÚ].GAL—[x x x
2 TA* ŠÁ GEŠ[^{TN} x x x] ú-še-[x x
3 ša 3 MU.MEŠ

BM 84876+

- ¹ Bowls [which the] chief [.....]ed from out of the wine [...].
³ For three years.

67. Accompanying Garments

BM 84908

- 1 ku-zip-p[i² x x] [ši-pir-a¹-ni
2 ša [T]A² ^mman-nu—ki—⁶IM LÚ.GAL—É.
GA[L²] [x x]

BM 84908

- ¹ Cloaks [(and) ...] textiles, which ... Mannu-ki-Adad, the palace manager [...]

68. Accompanying Horses

81-2-4,349

- 1 1 MÍ.KUR ša ^mšÚ—DÜ²—PAB.MEŠ LÚ.qur-
bu-tú na-ša-ni
2 4 KUR ša KUR.man-na-a-a ina É LÚ.IGI.DUB
[0]
3 9 KUR ša ^mpa-ra-u-u ina URU.bir-¹ti¹ [0]
4 PAB 14 KUR a-na UZU.MEŠ
5 ITI.GAN UD-[x-KAM]
6 lim-me ^mDÜG—[M—^{aš}-šur]

Iraq 27 p. 16 no. 6

- ¹ 1 mare, which Marduk-bani-ahhe, the bodyguard brought in.
² 4 horses of the Mannaean(s), in the house of the treasurer.
³ 9 horses of Para'u, in the town of Birtu.
⁴ Total 14 horses for meat.
⁵ Month of Kislev (IX), [xth] day, eponym year of Ṭab-ša[r-Aššur (717 B.C.)].

65 Photo: Iraq 15 (1953) Pl. 18/2 (= SAAS 1 Taf. 36/3). Previous edition: TCAE p. 20 7.2.2.

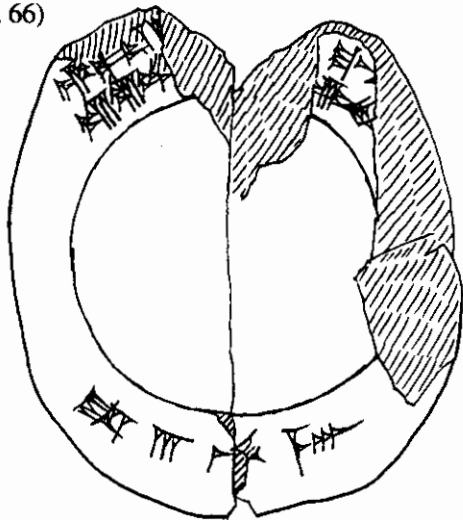
66 Join: S. Herbordt. Copy p. 204. Box sealing or sealing on wooden writing tablet (reverse: impression of flat wooden surface); 40 × 39 × 12 mm.

67 Copy p. 204. ¹ At end perhaps better 'e-*gl*'-ti (though the meaning of this would be obscure).

68 Iraq 15 (1953) 169 No. 6. Copy: Iraq 27 (1967) 16 No. 6. Previous edition: TCAE p. 21 7.2.5.

BM 84876 + BM 136986

(No. 66)



BM 84908 (No. 67)

