

**Bibliotheca Mesopotamica**

**Volume Six**

**Seals and Sealing  
in the Ancient Near East**

**edited by McGuire Gibson and Robert D. Biggs**

**SEALS AND SEALING  
IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST**



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# Bibliotheca Mesopotamica

Primary sources and interpretive analyses for the study  
of Mesopotamian civilization and its influences from  
late prehistory to the end of the cuneiform tradition

Edited by Giorgio Buccellati

Volume Six



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# Seals and Sealing in the Ancient Near East

edited by *McGuire Gibson* and *Robert D. Biggs*

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## Preface

Symposia, to be productive in the advance of scholarship, should occur at times of stress or rapid change in the development of a field. When they do, as in this instance, important communications take place on many levels. Most of the interchange is reflected, if not always accurately summarized, in the revised versions of formal papers like those comprising the body of this volume. Echoes persist, of course, of illuminating consensuses and disagreements not captured even in a continuous and uniformly intelligible transcript of the major exchanges. And in this and most similar cases transcripts of such exacting standards are simply not available. As a would-be participant who instead found himself engaged at the time in fieldwork, the range and cumulative impact of the formal contributions leaves me keenly aware of what I missed.

Yet later readers of the papers like myself have at least a slight countervailing advantage in greater detachment. The confusions and cross purposes of oral discourse sometimes befog issues rather than clarify them. Seen from a greater distance, it is the unifying themes in this symposium that loom in highest relief.

Diverse as they are, the papers converge in signalling a turning point in the study of ancient Near Eastern cylinder seals. A traditional and relatively cohesive paradigm of study is brought into uneasy coexistence with many alternative avenues of analytical approach. Direct attack and rebuttal is not the form of the discourse, however, for the respective domains of the alternatives may complement rather than compete with one another and in any case remain to be charted. Dimly but with considerable excitement, one glimpses an emerging, multi-stranded enterprise that can only enhance the relevance of the study of glyptic art and craft production for the understanding of wider cultural patterns.

The introduction briefly outlines developments in the disciplined study of cylinder seals as it has been traditionally carried forward, but the intellectual context underlying the study as a whole has been even more succinctly set forward by Henri Frankfort. A "continuous narrative" was the stated objective of his major contribution to the field, concerned with "the stylistic development . . . of the most characteristic pictorial expression of the Babylonians" (Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, p. xv). Chronological divisions are interposed into the flow of this narrative on the combined basis of historical, philological and archaeological considerations, but inscriptions on seals and questions of manufacturing technique, procurement of raw materials, and even symbolic or economic function receive extremely limited treatment as "subsidiary matters." The importance and viability of the approach described in Frankfort's pioneering work is reflected in its continuing service as a basis for major monographic contributions a generation and more later, and one can probably expect it to be further refined and applied for many years to come. In particular, as Pierre Amiet has indicated, the overall chronological sequence of stylistic patterns continues to be modified in detail as new local and regional patterns with somewhat distinctive or divergent histories are identified (Amiet, *Glyptique*, p. 12).

In a very profound sense, the orientations for study that emerge with this volume have only become possible because the foundations of our understanding of the temporal and spatial systematics of seals have been so well laid. But it is also true that this group of contributors is no longer primarily preoccupied with the major theme of Frankfort's work. Prominent in almost all of the newly differentiated directions for research is a greatly heightened concern for embedding seals and seal impressions in a web of administrative,

economic and cultural activities of which they are highly stylized and enduring—but also characteristically incomplete—representations.

Two modes of analysis seem to interact to produce this shift. One explores subsets of seals or seal impressions in an attempt to specify different patterns of manufacture, ownership or use. The other, more “contextual,” approach seeks to establish the broad institutional setting within which some group of seals was employed at a particular time period.

While obviously differing in some respects, it must be stressed that these two approaches are usually linked in practice and are essentially complementary. They are joined in these papers by reliance on full use of the textual sources, which, as Gibson observes, frequently was not the case in the past. They also share an awareness that stylistic unity need not imply an equivalent unity in the cultural significance or modes of use of the seals themselves. Hence careful attention is uniformly given to specifying particular patterns and settings of use, without asserting that all such patterns form a coherent, unified, or even presently delimitable whole. Finally, as in Johannes Renger’s demonstration that sealings served as aids in the authentication of documents rather than as counterparts of modern signatures representing personal commitments, these authors take pains to elicit ancient patterns of belief and behavior from their own data and to avoid the casual application of modern categories and perceptions.

What is gained, in other words, is a sense that the study of seals can genuinely contribute to the understanding of important aspects of ancient history and society. What is partially and temporarily set aside—we may take for granted that it can never be forgotten—is an earlier concern for the unifying themes of glyptic art, and for establishing their enduring place within the achievements of Mesopotamian civilization as a whole.

Robert McC. Adams



## Introduction

There are numerous publications on stamp and cylinder seals, and the field of glyptic study is vigorously healthy. Most studies of seals, however, are stylistic or iconographic. They deal with changes in style and content through time or from place to place, or even artist to artist. Very little has been done to define the function of seals and the practice of sealing in the ancient world. Only in the past few years has much attention been paid to the use of seals on cuneiform documents, but even when such attention has been given, the aim has usually been to date the appearance of specific styles or elements through their occurrence on dated tablets. It was clear that seals were used in administrative, bureaucratic contexts, in legal transactions, and in a few other ways, but the full range of function and change in function through time has not been investigated systematically.

It was in a discussion which Gibson had with Edith Porada and Hans J. Nissen at the Rencontre Assyriologique in Rome in July 1974 that the idea for a symposium on seal function was born. It was clear that such a meeting would appeal to Assyriologists, archeologists, historians, and anthropologists as well as art historians. In London, Gibson met Mogens Trolle Larsen, who agreed to join the symposium. Back in Chicago, a phone call to Arizona gained the participation of William L. Rathje. At the Oriental Institute the notion of a seal conference met with general interest from staff and students. The ground here had been prepared through years of work on seals by Henri Frankfort, Helene Kantor, Benno Landsberger, and I. J. Gelb.

The symposium was basically an Oriental Institute product, with contributions by our guests to complement or supplement our papers. The main focus was ancient Mesopotamia, but comparative material was brought in from Egypt, Iran, and Anatolia. An attempt to enlist the participation of scholars dealing with Sasanian, Islamic, Ottoman, and medieval European sealing practices was unsuccessful. W. W. Hallo's paper, submitted when he had become aware of Steinkeller's contribution, is a welcome addition. Robert McC. Adams agreed to read the contributions and to write a preface. Denise Schmandt-Besserat (University of Texas, Austin) was invited to attend because of her special interest in the early development of sealing. William Sumner (Ohio State University) was asked not only to attend the symposium but also to give a separate lecture on his excavations at the ancient Iranian capital, Anshan (Tal-i-Maliyan), where he found clay sealings in a palace. We are grateful to him and the other participants, especially M. Trolle Larsen, H. J. Nissen, and E. Porada, for making sacrifices of time and money to take part. The fact that there was such an enthusiastic response from as far away as Denmark and Germany when there was no financial underwriting of the symposium indicates that sealing is considered of great importance by a number of scholars.

The response would probably have been greater had we publicized the symposium. We chose not to because we wanted an informal, relaxed atmosphere unlike that of most meetings, with opportunities for real exchange of ideas. There was no prior commitment to publish the papers, so participants felt free to speculate a little more than might otherwise have been the case. We are grateful to the contributors for agreeing after the symposium to work up their papers for this volume and for doing so in a brief time. Unfortunately, because he had other publishing deadlines, M. Civil was forced to withdraw his paper on various philological problems concerning seals and sealings. H. Güterbock had a prior commitment to publish his contribution on Hittite sealing practices in a memorial volume for Professor Rodney Young. Gibson's paper on sealing at Nippur from Jamdat Nasr into Islamic times has also been omitted. Anyone who discusses Mesopotamian culture in a general way must draw much from Nippur because this site has

furnished by far the largest group of cuneiform tablets in southern Mesopotamia, and several of the contributions (especially those of P. Steinkeller and J. Renger) are based in great part on Nippur material. Thus Gibson's paper would have been repetitious except in the parts dealing with unpublished seals and sealings (for which others have publication rights). Some observations from the paper are included in his summation, however.

In editing these papers, our primary concerns have been ease of comprehension for an audience wider than Mesopotamian specialists, low-cost but sufficient illustrations, and completeness of references without unnecessary bulk. Some philologists may find translations of well-known terms superfluous, but we have tried to keep the interests of non-philologists in mind. Illustrations in a book on seals are always a problem, and a volume must usually be very expensive or else have poor photographs or else line drawings (often misleading) must be used. In this volume we have opted for the use of microfiche, allowing us a much greater number of illustrations at low cost.<sup>1</sup> Nearly all line drawings have been included in the text. As far as our references are concerned, we have generally used the abbreviations of the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary for Mesopotamian references and Helck and Otto's *Lexikon der Ägyptologie* for Egyptian. A few frequently-cited works and books not listed in these two sources are given in our list of abbreviations. For greater readability for non-philologists, most of the transliterations have been put in the footnotes. To help hold down costs we have omitted diacritical marks, italics, and special conventions unless needed to avoid ambiguity.

We are much indebted to Peter T. Daniels, who assisted in all phases of editing and preparing the papers for publication, and to Paul Zimansky, who took most of the slides shown at the symposium and who prepared the fiche for publication. We also thank J. A. Scurlock and C. Rochberg-Halton for their help with the symposium itself. J. A. Brinkman, Director of the Oriental Institute, and G. F. Swift, Curator of the Oriental Institute Museum, gave encouragement to the symposium and made facilities available. We are particularly grateful to Giorgio Buccellati for agreeing to publish this volume in the series *Bibliotheca Mesopotamica* following cancellation of what we thought was an agreement by the University of Chicago Press.

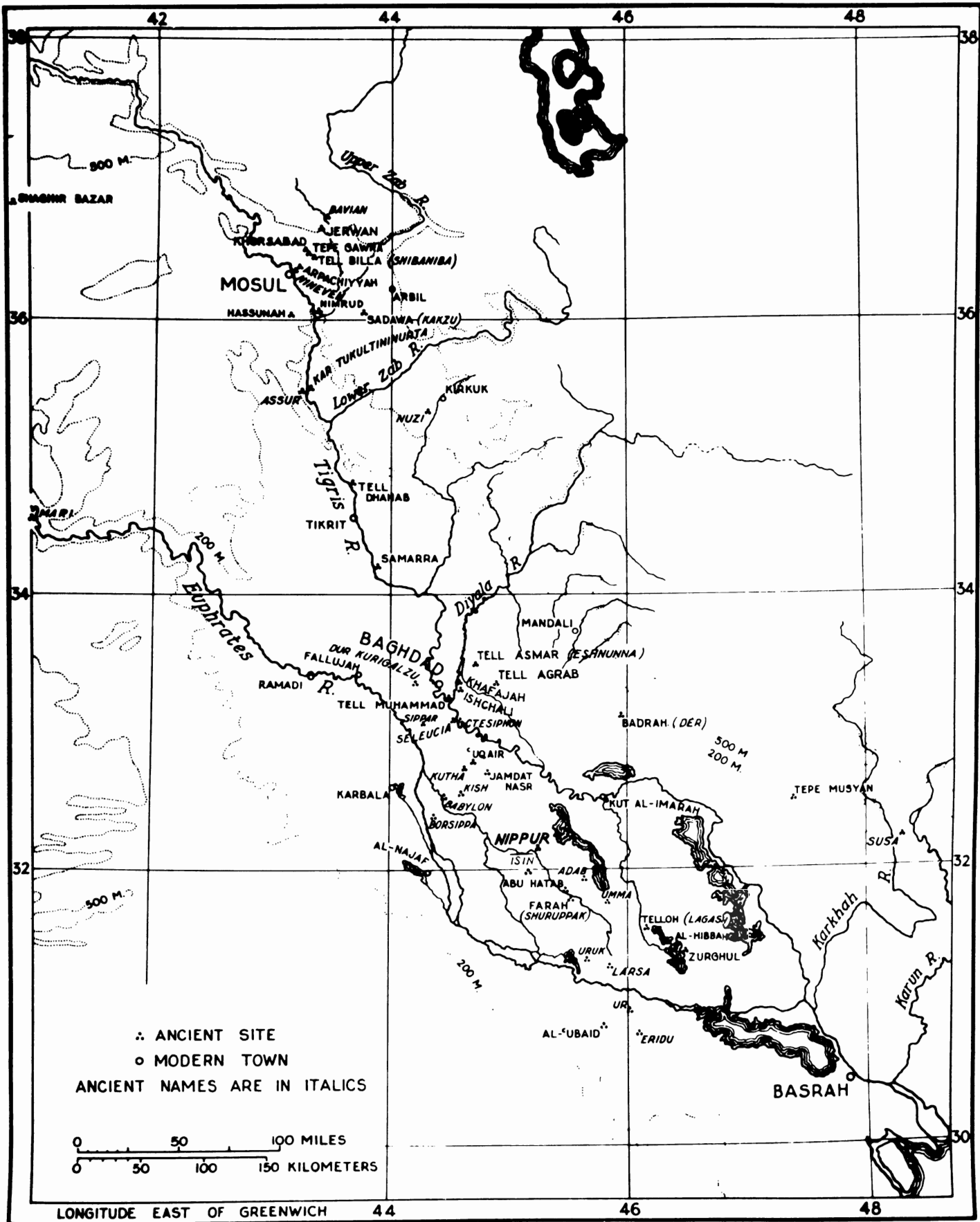
Chicago, July 1976

McGuire Gibson

Robert D. Biggs

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1. Illustrations on the fiche cards are referred to by letter and number, for example, A-5. The capital letter refers to the horizontal row, the number to the location within the row.



Map showing major ancient Mesopotamian sites.

## Of Professional Seal Cutters and Nonprofessionally Made Seals

by

Edith Porada  
Columbia University

I begin the discussion of professional seal cutters with a tentative suggestion as to the origin of cylinder seals. They seem to have appeared at the same time as a renewed fashion for fine vessels of stone,<sup>1</sup> which, in turn, may have been connected with an improvement in the technique of drilling stone. Is it possible that the bore cores of such vessels were used for cylindrical beads and seals?<sup>2</sup> It may be noted that the heavy work with the drill in the engraving of what may have been the earliest cylinder seals<sup>3</sup> suggests that the craftsmen were persons who ably used that mechanical tool, which was certainly employed by the makers of stone vessels. The idea implied here is that the makers of stone vessels may have developed the cylinder seal (and the crudely drilled stamp seals of related style), rather than that engravers of finely carved stamp seals introduced a variation in the shape and carving of their seal stones. This idea may find some support in D. O. Edzard's suggestion that the Sumerian name of the seal cutter, bur-gul, Akkadian parkullu or purkullu, refers in the second syllable gul to an activity associated with stone vessels.<sup>4</sup> Edzard refers to a Sumerian text in which the stone-cutter, bur-gul, occurs "(in the destroyed temple) where the stone-cutter used to make vessels for me, where the goldsmith used to make jewelry for me."<sup>5</sup> Summarizing the available evidence, Oppenheim commented that the purkullu was originally a craftsman who cut seals and worked on stone reliefs and stone vases. In the Neo-Assyrian period, however, the embossing of the metal-plating on palace and temple doors seems to have fallen within the competence of this artist.<sup>6</sup>

Little is known about the organization of a seal cutter's workshop in Mesopotamia but evidence from tablets of Alalakh in the fifteenth or fourteenth centuries B.C. indicates that, like the smith, leather-worker, carpet-weaver, and stonemason, the seal cutter had a workshop. This can be deduced from an Alalakh text which names 16 carpenters, 3 stonemasons, 5 carpet-weavers, 12 leather-workers, 16 smiths, and one seal cutter.<sup>7</sup>

Most important for present-day knowledge of the seal cutter's craft is a text which A. L. Oppenheim brought to my attention and of which he made a translation for me. It records an agreement to apprentice a slave for a period of five years to learn the craft of the purkullu from a man named Hashdaj, who was himself a slave of the Persian king Cambyses.<sup>8</sup>

The length of a seal cutter's apprenticeship is understandable in view of the difficulties facing the craftsman in creating a minute design in a curved surface in the negative (an intaglio) almost without the benefit of visual control. This lack of visual control may be assumed especially for work with the bow drill. The action of the seal cutter can be described as imagining himself inside the body of the man or animal which is being represented and as carving from the inside against the outer surface.<sup>9</sup>

It is obvious from this description that the seal cutter's technique was probably the most difficult of those applied in ancient arts. How much did a cylinder seal cost? Speculation should range from low-priced, mass-produced, carelessly carved pieces of ungainly stone to a cylinder described by Nabonidus as of "the costliest Jasper, a stone (befitting) a king, upon which Ashurbanipal, King of Assyria, had improved by

drawing upon it a picture of Sin—that his own name be remembered—and upon which he had written a eulogy of Sin and hung it around the neck of (the image of) Sin, (this stone) whose exterior had been damaged in these days, during the destruction (wrought by) the enemy, [I restored/mounted and deposited] in Esagila, the temple which keeps the great gods alive, in order not to (permit an) interruption of the oracles given by him (Sin) (by means of this seal?).”<sup>10</sup>

The piece, the cylinder of a god, was probably as large a cylinder as the two examples found at Babylon and discussed by E. D. Van Buren in an article entitled “Seals of the Gods.”<sup>11</sup> Since the cylinder was an appropriate offering for a king, it must have been considered valuable.

I would like to relate this cylinder, dedicated by a king, to one in the Oriental Institute Museum (A-2), the inscription of which was read by D. O. Edzard,<sup>12</sup> and may be translated:

To (the goddess) Nin-Ishkun  
Ilaknuid the seal cutter  
presented (this).

I understand the inscription as a dedication by a seal cutter to his patron. The fact that a seal cutter could dedicate an inscribed object of any kind places him in a somewhat elevated position among professionals. The magnificent engraving of the goddess Ishtar in the seal must have added to the value of the object, a value which, in turn, seems to me to indicate a certain social standing of the donor.

I tried to learn something about the social and economic position of seal cutters from the texts available to me. It is essential information because to some degree the position of the artist in a society influences the content and the form of his work. M. T. Barrelet posed the question concerning the position of the seal cutter of the Sargonic Period on the basis of the noticeable changes in style and iconography in that age. She pointed out that Henri Frankfort had ascribed the changes to a new concern with concrete representation on the part of the seal cutters. B. Buchanan saw in the new style a revolutionary change in the attitude of man toward society and the gods. P. Amiet saw Akkadian art primarily as a royal art with the iconography based on a cosmic symbolism. Mme Barrelet asked whether the seal cutter of the Sargonic Period would have been able to create an imagery which implied so many new elements, especially the narrative scenes in which gods are protagonists and which constitute over fifty per cent of the subject matter in the Sargonic age. She arrived at the conclusion that the seal cutter was not the inventor of the elaborate scenes but that he represented what he was ordered to execute, using as his prototypes images seen in the temple and at festivals; furthermore, that the relatively small number of elaborate scenes was the reflection of the attitudes and ideas of a select group of scribes.<sup>13</sup>

I think that an investigation of seals made by nonprofessionals can somewhat modify Mme Barrelet’s thesis to indicate that the basis for the iconographic repertory may have been larger than she had assumed. I hope that my examples are sufficiently convincing to obviate an explanation of which seal in particular is considered to have been made by a professional seal cutter and which by a nonprofessional.

One nonprofessionally made example (A-3a-b) comes from a Late Bronze Age level at Enkomi in Cyprus, specifically Late Bronze IIIa, about 1200-1190 B.C.<sup>14</sup> There were many different seal groups in Cyprus at that time, but none shows the thin lines of the present example. Two creatures of the type known as the Minoan-Mycenaean genii face each other on the Cypriote cylinder over a symbol consisting of two balls with pendent ribbons. To the left is a figure raising its hand above an animal placed upside down, probably a feline. The cylinder is made of clay and the way in which the lines were made by drawing a sharp point like a needle through the clay while it was wet and soft reminds me of signs on clay balls on tablets with Cypriote inscriptions found at Enkomi and at Ras Shamra-Ugarit.<sup>14a</sup>

A cylinder made by a professional seal cutter with a very similar subject was also found at Enkomi (A-4a-b).<sup>15</sup> It is made of hematite, a hard stone, not easy to carve, and shows the mastery of the professional in the graceful outline of the lion between the two genii whose heads are unfortunately broken off along with the top of the cylinder.

Not only the loss of the top of the hematite cylinder but also the lack of a clearly defined action leave the viewer guessing at the relation of the genii to the lion, though the latter probably represents evil and death in Cypriote iconography and the genii may be threatening or controlling the beast.

The action in the clay cylinder is much clearer: the genii, fearsome demons, guard the symbol; at their side a hero or worshipper with his hand raised above a lion or other feline has probably killed the latter. It is a lucid statement of a mythological or religious fact. The excavator, P. Dikaios, added a postscript to my appendix on his seals.<sup>16</sup> It seems that this cylinder and another were found in a room in which some ritual may have taken place. The ritual was doubtless performed by a priest and I suppose that he was also the engraver of the nonprofessionally made cylinder on which he produced the design much as he probably would have inscribed a text on a tablet.

Equal clarity of meaning can be found in a cylinder from the Sammelfund deposit in Uruk-Warka (A-5a).<sup>17</sup> Before the symbol of Inanna stands a female figure wearing the same two-pointed headdress worn by the goddess or priestess on the great vase,<sup>18</sup> where it is partly obliterated by a break. Before her are two baskets heaped with offerings and behind the baskets is the personage who offered them. This figure appears on cylinders of the period as a priest feeding animals,<sup>19</sup> on a sealing from Susa where he defends a temple,<sup>20</sup> or brings offerings to a temple, here exemplified by the well-known scene in which the offering is a feline with cut-off paws (A-5b).<sup>21</sup> All these are beautifully carved cylinders, more explicit than later seals as to the place of action and the action itself.<sup>22</sup>

Yet in none of these professionally made cylinders does the female figure appear, whereas she is seen not only in the first of this group (A-5a), but also in a number of others from the same deposit which are all crudely cut in soft limestone.<sup>23</sup>

There are extensive connections between the linear engraving of the cylinder from Uruk-Warka (A-5a) and the pictographic signs of the contemporary tablets. The Inanna symbol especially, with the slightly curving lines indicating the post, is closer to the pictographic signs of the contemporary tablets<sup>24</sup> than to the straight three-dimensional post seen on the three other cylinders of this group.

Who would have made such seals for what purpose? A man who did not have the means of obtaining a well-made cylinder? Hardly. More likely it was a scribe—at that time presumably a priest who made these seals for a specific ritual. This seems all the more likely since the objects were found with what seems to have been the furnishings of a temple in which Inanna must have played an important role.<sup>25</sup>

In our investigation of cylinders of nonprofessional origin we move to the Sargonic Period with an example from the stratified cylinders of the Diyala sites (A-6).<sup>26</sup> Frankfort has noted that such seals appear as popular products outside the glyptic tradition.<sup>27</sup> A tall, beardless, and therefore presumably female figure is seated with a stalk or ear of grain in one hand and another such stalk at her back, probably meant to be on her other side. A smaller figure, marked as a deity by a pair of horns, carries a bucket. A small unidentified seated figure appears at the end of the scene.

I think the scene was meant to show a grain goddess like the one in a professionally made cylinder of the same age from Khafaje (A-7a).<sup>28</sup> Whereas the professional seal cutter was bound by stylistic conventions to represent all figures with their heads at the same level, from the cylinder of nonprofessional make we get an idea of the concept of a gigantic deity before whom the small worshipper may have been meant to sit

in permanent adoration. It is possible that this was a home-made seal but I think it could also have been produced by a nonprofessional seal cutter for some ritual.

Other examples come from Nuzi.<sup>29</sup> A number of cylinders were not considered worthy of publication because of their crudeness or, in one case, lack of definition. In the last mentioned example, a piece of clay shaped like a cylinder, but not perforated, had been rolled while still damp over an impression of Syrian style (fig. 1).<sup>30</sup> This attractive branch of the Mitannian style prevailed in Syria in the fifteenth and fourteenth centuries B.C. showing a multitude of figures, guilloches, and tree designs delicately engraved with a drill.



Figure 1. Impression of a clay cylinder which had been rolled over a Syro-Mitannian sealing to produce a negative relief, in turn usable for sealing. Nuzi (Harvard Semitic Museum).

Not one original cylinder of this style was found at Nuzi, but there are numerous impressions made with seals of Syrian style on Nuzi tablets.<sup>31</sup> One wonders whether this clay cylinder was made by a clever inhabitant of Nuzi who used another person's impression to make an elegant foreign-looking seal for himself, or whether actually this object was not meant to be used as a seal, a purpose for which it was not well suited because of the lack of definition in the negative relief. It is the only such example known to me and therefore no further comment is possible.

Another unperforated clay cylinder, one deeply if unprofessionally engraved (A-7b),<sup>32</sup> shows a large and impressive-looking bull standing before a seated figure which is so simplified as to look like a pictograph. Above the back of the bull is a symbol topped by sun disk and moon crescent. This symbol, which I have discussed in another context,<sup>33</sup> occurs occasionally at Nuzi, most prominently on the sealing of king Ithiia,<sup>34</sup> but its meaning, namely its association with a bull, doubtless the emblematic animal of Teshup, the chief deity of the Hurrian pantheon, could be derived only from this nonprofessionally engraved example.

Another such example, perhaps of faience, of which only the lower half is preserved (fig. 2), is more complicated. Here a frontally positioned female figure holding a tambourine is approached by a male figure from the right, and beside her is the large head of a bull.<sup>35</sup> The stylization of the bull shows the head and the bone from which the horns spring clearly distinguished from the forehead as in the wall painting from Nuzi.<sup>36</sup> An earlier representation of a bull's head does not show that feature;<sup>37</sup> for this reason alone the present cylinder should be dated in the Nuzi Period. It is important that the date of the design be defined because the closest parallel for the subject, the cylinder of Ana-Sin-taklaku, an official of king Zimrilim of Mari, originated several centuries earlier.<sup>38</sup> There we see a goddess with a tambourine hanging from her elbow. She wears the boots with upturned toes worn by Hittite warriors and a bordered mantle, open in front, likewise associated with male martial figures. The figure expresses the double function of the

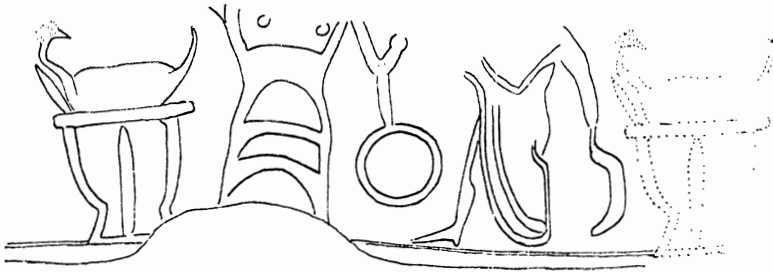


Figure 2. Fragmentary cylinder with a frontal goddess and a king; a bucranium terminates the scene. Nuzi (Harvard Semitic Museum).

goddess as deity of war and at the same time in her alluring aspect, indicated by the exposure of the lower part of her body as goddess of love and procreation. This figure can be related to the little ivory from Nuzi about which M. Mellink wrote a remarkable iconographic study.<sup>39</sup> She pointed out that the figurine was nude except for a mantle and a warrior's boot on one foot. She suggested identification of the figure with the goddess of war, Shaushga. Several other representations of this goddess exist in widely separated regions, indicating that she was known and worshipped over a large area.<sup>40</sup>

Like other nonprofessionally made cylinders, the one from Nuzi (fig. 2) showing the widely revered great war goddess with the tambourine being approached by what was doubtless the local ruler, was executed in a linear manner, clearly recognizable but devoid of esthetic qualities or pretensions. In summary, cylinders of this type have revealed that there was a religious imagery outside the world of professional seal engraving. The question is whether this was a widely distributed imagery, available to everybody, or one restricted to a special group. When I began this search, I was sure that some seals had been made by people who could not afford the services of a professional seal cutter and had therefore created their own cylinders with the designs most favored at that time and in a specific region. I am no longer certain of this and would suggest instead that there were often, though probably not always, seals made by priestly scribes<sup>41</sup> who drew the figures like ideograms and combined them in scenes which indeed reflected concerns and mythological concepts most common at the time and in the area in which these objects originated.

#### NOTES

1. Fine stone vessels have appeared in levels of the sixth millennium B.C. at several sites in the Near East, for example at Jarmo (R. J. Braidwood and B. Howe, *Prehistoric Investigations in Iraqi Kurdistan*, SAOC 31 [1960], p. 45 and pl. 21:12-16), at Umm Dabaghiyah (D. Kirkbride, *Iraq* 25 [1973], pp. 4-5 and pls. 2:1-11 and 8 b), and at Tell as-Sawwan (F. el-Waily and B. Abu es-Soof, *Sumer* 21 [1965], p. 22 and pls. 28, 32, and 24), and the tradition continued in the north during the Halaf Period as shown at Arpachiyah (M. Mallowan, *Iraq* 2 [1935], pp. 76-79 and fig. 44), but the number of such stone vessels diminished during the Ubaid Period. The limited number of stone vessels of the Ubaid Period can be deduced from the listing by A. L. Perkins, *The Comparative Archeology of Mesopotamia* (SAOC 25 [1949]), p. 86. A new impetus, however, seems to have been provided in the Late Uruk and Jamdat Nasr periods in the last centuries of the fourth millennium B.C., perhaps due to the development of a more effective drilling technique. At Tepe Gawra the tombs dated to Level X (approximately contemporary with Uruk V, ca. 3300 B.C.) and later show that the craftsmen of that site "combined unusual skill and a highly developed sense of esthetic values with imported varieties of stone . . ." (A. J. Tobler, *Tepe Gawra* 2 [Philadelphia, 1950], p. 82).



In the south there are two striking examples of stone vessels: the great vase with relief carving from Uruk, which I believe to have been made in Uruk at the time of the IV a phase and the probably later vase with lions found at the same site (for excellent reproductions see E. Strommenger and M. Hirmer, *5000 Years of the Art of Mesopotamia* [New York, 1964], pls. 19-22, and 26-27). For a survey of additional stone vessels of this age, see Perkins, *Comparative Archaeology*, pp. 134-38. The relatively small amounts of lapis lazuli used at any time in comparison with the other stones mentioned in the excavation reports, all of which were traded from Iran (see A. Schüller, *UVB* 19 [1963], p. 58), suggests that lapis lazuli was only a very minor portion of the large amounts of various types of stones for luxury objects imported into Mesopotamia. This trade was apparently closely connected with the improved methods of working in stone and seems to have constituted a contemporary phenomenon together with the production of large numbers of stone vessels and the emergence of cylinder seals.

2. The lack of examination of stone vessels for the method of their manufacture is surprising. Only Sir Leonard Woolley described an instrument for boring stone vessels (UE 4 [Philadelphia, 1956], p. 14, fig. 5 and pl. 13, U. 16405). This is a large drill head which Woolley thought was used in conjunction with a bow drill. He mentioned that previous to the use of this large drill head a smaller hole might have been bored out (*ibid.*, p. 185, s.v. U. 16405). A somewhat different method appears to have been used in the vessel examined by E. Heinrich and described by him in *Kleinfunde aus den archaischen Tempel-Schichten in Uruk-Warka* [hereafter *Kleinfunde*], (Leipzig, 1936), p. 36: "Nur die Höhlung ist mit einem schnell gedrehten Werkzeug ausgebohrt."

In view of this uncertainty concerning the method of hollowing out stone vessels in the Uruk-Jamdat Nasr Periods, I asked Mr. Joseph Ternbach to investigate the matter since he is very interested in ancient working methods and has access to material for such studies. In a preliminary report which is to be expanded into a fully documented article, he was able to determine that in a jar of this time range there had been six drillings at almost regular intervals forming a circle about 6 cm. in diameter. The resulting core, which might have been loosened from the bottom by wedging, would have been large enough for one of the great cylinders of the age. In examining two Early Dynastic vessels, Mr. Ternbach found that they appear to have been hollowed out by means of a tubular drill. One would think that this was also the method by which the vessel from the *Kleinfunde* hoard, described by Heinrich, was bored.

3. P. Amiet, *La glyptique mésopotamienne archaïque* (Paris, 1961), p. 38, suggested that the cylinders with massive forms such as are produced by drilling, seen in some of the sealings of Susa and Uruk, belong to the beginning of cylinder seal engraving.
4. D. O. Edzard, *AfO* 19 (1959-60), p. 24: "Für gul als an Steingefässen ausgeübte handwerkliche Tätigkeit vgl. die ŠL 429, 19b zitierte Stelle PBS 10/2, Nr. 15, Kol. I 8-9: <sup>8</sup>bur-gul-e bur ba-an-gul-la-mu <sup>9</sup>za-gìn-dím-e za-gìn ba-an-dím-ma-mu "mein (Haus,) in dem der Steinschneider die Steingefässe bearbeitet hat, in dem der Lapislazuli-Arbeiter den Lapislazuli bearbeitet hat." I owe the reference to D. Marcus, who kindly gathered references on purkullu for me.
5. Translation after *CAD Z*, p. 10, s.v. zadimmu.
6. *Dream-book*, p. 263, n. 16.
7. See M. Dietrich and O. Loretz in *ZA* 60 (1970), p. 121.
8. *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 6 (July, 1968), p. 145, N. 25.
9. I am describing here my own sensations when, years ago, the gem engraver Miss Beth Sutherland kindly permitted me to use her tools in an attempt to carve a design on a stone.
10. Cited from the text of the basalt stela in Istanbul, translated by Oppenheim in Pritchard, *ANET*<sup>2</sup>, p. 311.
11. *Studi e materiali di historia delle religioni* 10 (1934), pp. 165-73.
12. *AfO* 22 (1968-69), p. 17, no. 27: a-na <sup>d</sup>NIN-iš-ku-un, i-la-ak-nu-id, [bur]-gul, A.MU.RU.

13. "Etude de glyptique akkadienne: l'imagination figurative et le cycle d'Éa . . ." Or. n.s. 39 (1970), pp. 213-51.
14. See my Appendix I, "Seals," in P. Dikaios, *Enkomi 2* (Mainz, 1971), p. 798 sub. no. 15 (Inv. 1265) and plates indicated there.
- 14a. For example, see *Enkomi 2*, pl. 191 and C. F. A. Schaeffer in *Ugaritica 3*, p. 229, fig. 204a and pls. 8 and 9.
15. *Enkomi 2*, p. 793, sub. no. 7 (Inv. 446) and plates indicated there.
16. "Supplementary Notes on the Archaeological and Stratigraphical Evidence Connected with the Cylinder and Stamp Seals," *Enkomi 2*, pp. 813-14.
17. Heinrich, *Kleinfunde*, pl. 18, a (W 14778g). On p. 30, Heinrich notes that the design, simply scratched on the cylinder, permits clear definition of details such as the headdress of the woman.
18. *Ibid.*, pls. 2-3.
19. *Moortgat, Rollsiegel*, no. 29.
20. *Amiet, Elam (Auvers-sur-Oise, 1966)*, p. 86, no. 45 A-B.
21. For an enlarged reproduction of the cylinder formerly in the Newell Collection now in the Yale Babylonian Collection see my section in M. J. Mellink, *Die frühen Stufen der Kunst, Propyläen Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 13 (Berlin, 1974), pls. 72e and 73b, text p. 164.
22. The extant cylinder seals of Uruk to Jamdat Nasr Style with representations of the priestly ruler were collected and reproduced in drawings by Amiet in *La glyptique mésopotamienne archaïque*, pls. 43-47 and pl. 48 bis, *passim*.
23. Heinrich, *Kleinfunde*, pl. 18b-d (W 14806p, W 14819f, W 14772 c2). The design of the cylinder on top, pl. 18a (W 14877g), is more explicit than the others in having two curving lines over the baskets which Heinrich rightly interprets as the heaped offerings (see p. 30).
24. A. Falkenstein, *ATU*, pp. 57ff., nos. 208-10.
25. See the suggestions made by Heinrich, *Kleinfunde*, p. 4, concerning the objects of the *Sammelfund* as material which had been dedicated to a deity and had been subsequently buried at the occasion of a rebuilding.
26. *Frankfort, Stratified Cylinder Seals*, pl. 63, no. 678 (A 11382 in the Oriental Institute Museum).
27. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
28. *Ibid.*, pl. 40, no. 423 (A 17018 in the Oriental Institute Museum). It was included as fig. 540 in *Boehmer, Glyptik*. See his discussion of the cylinders on p. 96 under the heading *Verschiedene Vegetationsgottheiten 3) Akkadisch III*.
29. To the late G. Ernest Wright thanks are expressed here for having granted me permission to publish these cylinder seals, which form part of the collection of the Harvard Semitic Museum.
30. The seal had no number. The number NN 48 was given to it by C. Gavin, whose help while I was working on this material at the Semitic Museum is gratefully acknowledged. The measurements of the "seal" are: height 28.8 mm., diameter 12.5 mm. Discovery of how the negative design on the cylinder was obtained was made in collaboration with P. L. Kohl.
31. See my *Seal Impressions of Nuzi*, *AASOR 24* (1947), nos. 634-47.
32. The number of this cylinder in the Harvard Semitic Museum is A9-27-28, the height 29.5 mm., diameter 16 mm. It is published in "Standards and Stools on Sealings of Nuzi . . ." in *Le Temple et le Culte (Compte rendu de la vingtième Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale . . . Leiden, 1972)*, (Leiden, 1975), pp. 164-72, pl. 32, fig. 8.
33. See *ibid.*, pp. 154-62.
34. *Ibid.*, pl. 2, no. 6. The imprint was first published by E. R. Lacheman in drawing in *HSS 14*, pl. 6.

35. The number of the cylinder at the Harvard Semitic Museum is 29-2-12, the preserved height 15 mm., the diameter 10 mm.
36. R. F. S. Starr, *Nuzi* (Cambridge, Mass., 1937), pls. 128-29.
37. C. F. A. Schaeffer in *Ugaritica* 4, p. 132, fig. 113.
38. The ancient impressions of that cylinder from Mari were published in Parrot, *Mission archéologique de Mari*, vol. 2, *Le palais: documents et monuments* (Paris, 1959), pl. 48:71-73, 81b. For a drawing of the impression see P. Amiet, "Notes sur le répertoire iconographique de Mari à l'époque du Palais," *Syria* 37 (1960), p. 230, fig. 13.
39. M. Mellink, "A Hittite Figurine from Nuzi," in *Vorderasiatische Archäologie: Studien und Aufsätze* A. Moortgat, ed., K. Bittel, E. Heinrich, B. Hrouda, W. Nagel (Berlin, 1964), pp. 155-64.
40. There is a fragmentary impression from Nuzi published by E. R. Lacheman in HSS 14, pl. 111, no. 270, which shows Shaushga, who is also seen on a cylinder in Mitannian style from Thebes in Boeotia (publication in preparation).
41. Although texts frequently mention clay figurines used in rituals, there is no textual evidence known to me that clay cylinders were thus employed. A collection of references concerning the use of seals in rituals was made by B. L. Goff, "The Role of Amulets in Mesopotamian Ritual Texts," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 19/1-2 (1956), pp. 1-39, *passim*.

## Aspects of the Development of Early Cylinder Seals

by

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Function, certainly the most crucial aspect of seals, will be the focus of my paper. Yet, a word of caution is necessary. The material available does not lend itself easily to a discussion of function since for the early years we lack those kinds of information which scholars of later periods can successfully use for their investigations of seal function. For the early periods we find a very uneven distribution of seals and sealed objects, as far as the exact provenience is concerned. There are no inscriptions on the seals I will consider, and the objects being sealed are either uninscribed or cannot actually be deciphered. Furthermore, much of the pertinent material from the controlled excavations of Nippur and Uruk remains unpublished. It is especially this latter reason which precludes most parts of the following paper from being more than a series of hypotheses.

However, there can be no doubt that cylinder seals had first of all a function in economic life.<sup>1</sup> As will be seen below, aside from writing, sealing was the most important part of the controlling mechanisms of the economy.<sup>2</sup> We certainly, therefore, should be looking in this direction for an explanation of the origin of the cylinder seal.

### The Origin of the Cylinder Seal

We can safely assume that the stamp seals which preceded cylinders already had a function in the economic system<sup>3</sup> and we know from excavations that they were replaced by the cylinder seal in a rather short period of time in both Khuzestan<sup>4</sup> and Babylonia.<sup>5</sup> There are two explanations for this change from stamp to cylinder seal: 1) the economic system served by both kinds of seals was unchanged and "the primary intention for the development of invention of the cylinder seal seems to have been the need for a detailed narration or an important message to the public,"<sup>6</sup> which could not be given on the small stamp seal surface, or 2) changes in the economic system required a change in the kind of seals.

From several approaches, I have concluded that the Late Uruk period (ca. 3300 B.C.) must have seen major changes in the economic system along with changes from a more kinship-oriented society to a stratified society, observable in the increase of the size of the economic units and the development of the organization of labor.<sup>7</sup> These points seem to demand the assumption of a restructuring of the controlling mechanisms, since the loss of social control provided by the earlier kinship structure necessitated the introduction of more objective means of control. Looking at stamp seals and cylinder seals from this angle we indeed find that cylinder seals provided a more effective control because the entire surface of an object could be sealed and thus protected from fraud and distortion, while the relatively small and restricted imprints of stamp seals could only partially secure the item.

The increase of economic and social stratification led to rather elaborate hierarchical systems of various levels of decision-making and responsibility-bearing. As the general use of seals increased it became necessary to furnish those people at the top level of responsibility with seals which, by their design, would indicate to any viewer within reach of a particular economic system that an object was sealed under the direct responsibility of those individuals. In order to facilitate this aim, the range of variability in seal design had to be larger than was allowed by the limited space on the stamp seal. Hence, I see the cylinder seal as the perfect answer to both problems: the need for better control and the need for an increase of the range of variability. As we will see, these two features continue to be main arguments in the explanation of the further development of the cylinder seal. Before embarking on this development it is necessary to discuss the various techniques employed for the manufacture of seals.

### The Tools of the Seal Cutter

By looking at the way cylinder seals of the early historic periods are made we can distinguish between two groups: 1) seals in which human and animal figures are rendered naturalistically in a way that shows even minute details;<sup>8</sup> the tools used were a variety of large and small engravers, the traces of which were finally polished to give the seals a smooth appearance, and 2) a group of seals showing much more schematic figures and geometric motifs done with totally different tools, of which the drill is the best known.<sup>9</sup> At least for the earlier phase of cylinder seal manufacture there seems to be a complete correlation between tool and style with the well-cut seals always made, or at least finished, with engravers, whereas the schematic seals are always made exclusively with mechanical tools such as the drill.

I wish to discuss another mechanical tool the use of which normally is not given much attention, though it was used as frequently as the drill: the cutting wheel (fig. 1).<sup>10</sup> The traces of this tool can be seen by a comparison of the straight lines on the well-cut Late Uruk seals with the straight lines on the so-called Jamdat Nasr seals.<sup>11</sup> In the first case the ends of the lines are rounded or squared off, whereas the lines of the second group are thinner and shallower towards the end until they fade out completely. These are characteristic traces of a tool consisting of a round grindstone fixed onto a rotating axle set in bearings.<sup>12</sup> The technique used in operating the cutting wheel was much the same as that employed with the potter's wheel. The grindstone probably was rather thin with a rounded or sharp edge, which gave round or triangular cuts. The length of the diminishing ends of the lines cut into a flat surface depended on the diameter of the wheel. If applied to a convex surface, as in the case of a stone cylinder, the length of these diminishing ends further depended on the relation between the diameters of the cutting wheel and of the stone cylinder. If the diameter of the tool was larger than that of the cylinder the taper would be long; if the tool was smaller, then the taper would be extremely short (fig. 2).

In addition to producing straight lines it was possible to some extent to produce curved lines by slightly tilting the stone cylinder's axis against the wheel. Because the wheel would remain fixed, the result would not be a simple curved line, but the line would be wider in the bend. This same principle of slightly tilting the cylinder's axis could also be used for another effect, the widening of the ends of a line.

Turning to actual cylinder seals of the Late Uruk-Jamdat Nasr-Early Dynastic I periods we find a number of traces and variations (see table I). Seen chronologically, the use of all kinds and sizes of cutting wheel for all kinds of straight lines was known from the Late Uruk Period on. The procedure of achieving additional effects by tilting the cylinder's axis seems to have come in slightly later.

Some remarks on the drill should be added here, since it seems to be widely accepted that the drill worked more or less on the same principles as those still seen in today's Near Eastern bazaars. In modern practice some kind of drilling head at one end of a wooden stick is placed on the piece to be worked, the other end of the shaft being pressed down with the chest. One hand directs the tool, the other moves a bow whose string is wound around the shaft and thus makes the shaft rotate.

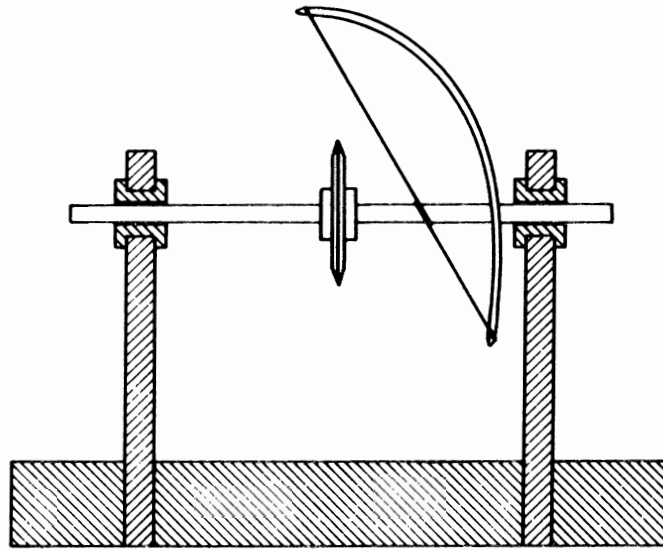


Figure 1. Drawing of a cutting wheel.

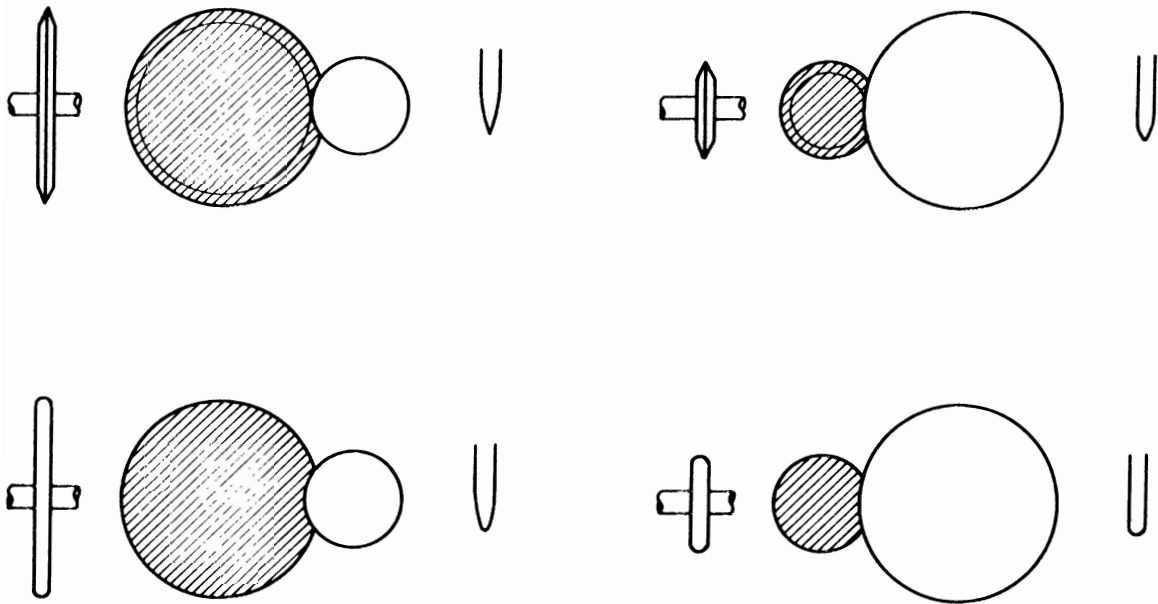


Figure 2. Grooves resulting from various combinations of cutting wheels and cylinder sizes.

To be sure, there is no obvious argument against the assumption that the same method was used in ancient times. However, because the cutting wheel was mounted—and it must have been since the direction of its use was perpendicular to its axle—with the axle set in bearings, and because we can see the same principle being used with the potter's wheel, why should this principle not have been applied to the drill? If mounted, its use would have been much easier since the seal cutter could use both hands for pressing the stone cylinder against the tool.

Table I

Lines	Section	Ends	Type of Seal	Example	Period
straight	round	short	temple and flock	Frankfort, Stratified Seals, no. 284	JN
			city	Legrain, UE 3, pl. 54, no. 431	ED I
straight	round	long	brocade	Frankfort, Stratified Seals, nos. 235-37	ED I
straight	triangular	short	eye	Frankfort, Stratified Seals, nos. 177-80	LU
			geometric	Frankfort, Stratified Seals, no. 155	JN
straight	triangular	long	fish	Buchanan, Ashmolean, no. 49	LU
curved	round		brocade	Porada, Corpus, nos. 46, 48	JN
curved	triangular	broad	geometric	Moortgat, Rollsiegel, no. 48	JN
		broad	geometric	Frankfort, Stratified Seals, no. 241	JN

### Functional Differences in Early Cylinder Seals

Up to rather recent times there were clear-cut chronological subdivisions like the Uruk, the Jamdat Nasr, and the Early Dynastic periods, separated from each other by obvious changes in the material culture. Such changes were seen especially in those traits which were represented by rich and seemingly chronologically coherent material: architecture, pottery, and seals. It was mainly the so-called "breaks" in the development of one or more of these traits which suggested the chronological divisions.<sup>13</sup> Although it was felt that the material basis for the observation of such "breaks" and their linkage to chronological aspects was too narrow, there was not enough new material to allow the formulation of a new system; so the system was widely accepted to such an extent that people began to use it as a template when dealing with a reconstruction of early history.

However, there are basic doubts as to the historic relevance of such "breaks" in the archeological record. Quite often these "breaks" can be explained as consequences of technical innovations, as for instance in pottery,<sup>14</sup> or of cogent changes on the way to a consolidation of the political structures, as can be seen in the development of some architectural features.<sup>15</sup> Cylinder seals have escaped such scrutiny and interpretation so far, mainly because the rich material from the excavations at Uruk still remains unpublished.<sup>16</sup> However, we are fortunate enough to have been presented recently with pertinent material from places outside Babylonia. Most important in this respect are the excavations at Chogha Mish, Iran,<sup>17</sup> and Habuba Kabira South, Syria.<sup>18</sup> All the evidence from these sites points to the fact that both places were abandoned within the Late Uruk period, or, to be more precise, at the beginning or within

the time of Archaic Level IVa of Eanna in Uruk. This conclusion is based on the fact that we find at these sites the immediate precursors of writing, i.e., sealed clay balls<sup>19</sup> and crude clay tablets with numbers only,<sup>20</sup> but no real writing, which in Uruk makes its first appearance in Level IVa; thus all the seals and sealings from both places can safely be dated within the Late Uruk period. Since there were also at these places seals of types which formerly were taken as indicators for the Jamdat Nasr period, an earlier conjecture of E. Porada's was confirmed—namely, that “pigtailed women,” “fish,” and “eye” seals actually existed already in the Late Uruk period.<sup>21</sup> Such redating would fit in the general Near Eastern picture much better if seals of these types found outside of the Khuzestan-Babylonian area do not have to be taken any longer as witnesses for a Jamdat-Nasr expansion but for a much more logical Uruk expansion.<sup>22</sup> However, by this redating we seem to lose control completely over the early development of cylinder seals because the obvious differences between various seal groups can no longer be explained as pure chronological differences.

To be sure, there were changes and developments within each of the seal groups, and once we have sufficient material we certainly will be able to observe chronological differences; but at present our material is still too scanty and the stratigraphy of Uruk too insufficiently published to allow the observation of such small-scale changes.

Yet, though we cannot trace the various developments in detail, especially the local differences, it seems to be possible to trace some overall lines from the beginning of cylinder seals down to the end of the Early Dynastic I period. The basic assumptions as to the origin and purpose of cylinder seals are that they were a functional part of the economy and that the various patterns engraved on them played an important role in this function. Turning now to this problem, the discussion must start with a definition of the function of the seal. As we know from various uses of the seals on jar-covers, on clay balls, and on clay tablets, the common purpose of the seal impression seems to have been to signal to any viewer that a certain person as an individual or a member of a group was present at a certain act, be it as witness, as overseer, or as controller. Thus, the purpose of any design on the seal was to allow anyone to make this identification. The number of variations of seal designs thus depends on the number of people using seals. In case this number is small, and simple patterns on seals are sufficient, the number of variations can be increased by using combinations of simple patterns.<sup>23</sup> Such a procedure, however, allows an increase in the number of variations only to a certain point beyond which the system has to be changed and a category of patterns has to be found which would lend itself to a greater range of variations. One solution is the use of rather complex scenes in which the possibility of varying composition and motifs and details offers an inexhaustible range of variation.

Above, we divided the cylinder seals of the Late Uruk period into two large groups: a group of very individualistic seals, well cut with the use of engravers, and another group of seals with designs consisting of simple patterns or combinations thereof, and made exclusively with the help of mechanical tools. Although the simple pattern seals have a limited range of variation and thus can be used to identify only a limited number of people, there exist a great number of actual seals of this kind. Apparently the number of seal owners was larger than the number of persons to be identified. At the same time there was a large number of individualistic seals showing that the economic system apparently also needed a type of seal with a wide range of variation. This fact could be best explained if the simple pattern seals belonged to “legal persons,” i.e., institutions in which there was more than one individual authorized to use the seals. To verify an act of sealing, it was necessary to trace back such an impression only to the “legal person,” not the individual who did the sealing. On the other hand the wide range of variation in the group of well-cut seals show that they probably were used by persons (or their representatives) in cases where it was necessary to trace back the impression to particular individuals. Thus the basic difference between the two large groups of seals is their connection to “legal” versus “natural” persons.



The existence of both groups of seals at the same time shows that there were situations in which a) people found it necessary to name the specific individual seal owner, and b) where it was sufficient to identify the owner/user as a member of a “legal person” or institution. Thus the occasions in which a seal of either group would be used differed, and probably excluded each other: whereas individual seals would serve as signatures, witnessing the presence of a controlling officer at transactions in which an individual would bear the main responsibility—on receipts, on lists of stock or the like, seals of institutions would be used in cases where the level of individual responsibility was much lower, where it was necessary only to show that a certain item belonged to a certain institution or part of an institution, or was distributed by that institution.

Elsewhere I have shown that at least by the end of the Late Uruk period the main feature of the economic structure apparently was a rather strict hierarchical order with different levels of decision-making or responsibility-bearing.<sup>24</sup> Applied here, that could mean that the individualistic seals signifying individual, i.e., higher, responsibility should be associated with a higher rank in that system of hierarchies, the simple-design seals with a lower rank. Starting from the above-stated correlation between the kinds of tools used and the kinds of seals, another correlation becomes evident between the cost of a seal and the rank of the seal owner/user within the economic system. The more expensive individualistic seals—much more time had to be invested to cut these seals—were owned or authorized to be used by people in the higher levels of the hierarchy.

There probably were not only different groups of people using the two groups of seals, but also differences in sealing practice and in the places where they were used. That could explain the sharp differences in the occurrence and use of the two groups of seals: whereas we have very few actual examples of the individualistic seals but quite a number of impressions, we find the opposite with the simple-design seals. Another difference is that we find a number of individualistic seals impressed on clay tablets of the early stages of writing, but never simple-design seals. As most probably the places where things were sealed and where the sealings were broken were different, the sharp contrast just mentioned may be nothing but a reflection of the very uneven excavation activities within excavated sites.<sup>25</sup>

This view of different groups of seals being linked to different levels of responsibility or decision-making within the socio-economic system rather than representing chronological or purely social differences fits well the general view of the Late Uruk period as a time of a stratified society highly differentiated socially and economically.

If we turn now to the Jamdat Nasr period the points mentioned still hold true, with one exception: whereas for the Late Uruk period we saw correlation between representational seals and simple tools on the one hand and between simple-design seals and mechanical tools on the other, this correlation seems weaker for the Jamdat Nasr period. During this period an ever-increasing number of seals of the representational group were cut with the aid of mechanical tools, probably with the intention of reducing the time involved. As in other cases, however, the use of mechanical tools led to a loss of variation possibilities because of the standardizing effect, but probably the possible range of variation among representational seals was still larger than among the simple-design seals. Because of the increasing use of the mechanical tools by the end of the Jamdat Nasr period or slightly later, such a degree of uniformity was reached that within the group of representational seals the range of possibilities was not considered large enough any more.

Since the economic system probably still required seals designating individual responsibility, the need was felt for a new group which could fill this gap. Therefore it certainly is more than pure coincidence that this is just the time when a new group of seals appears whose compositions again offer the wide range of possibilities characteristic of the former individualistic seals: the Early Dynastic I sealings from Nippur.<sup>26</sup> Taking their raw material from the older tradition but rearranging everything and using different principles of composition they represent the earliest stage of Early Dynastic seal development.<sup>27</sup>

An interesting example of the stage when the former individualistic group lost individuality is the so-called "Brocade" seals. They represent the utmost simplification of that group, since only the motif of the row of animals is retained.<sup>28</sup> At the same time the traces of the cutting wheel are employed in a highly artistic and appropriate manner, showing that this group of seals by no means represents a decline in quality from the earlier seals, but that the "Brocade" Style marks the—possibly local—very sophisticated end of a long development.

It is interesting to note that after so many changes there was in the Early Dynastic I period a situation closely resembling the situation in the Late Uruk period. With more or less the same simple-design seals still being used along with the new group of individualistic seals, we find once more the old correlation between function of the seal and the tools employed. The Nippur individualistic seals show no traces of mechanical tools.

In light of this correlation it would be good to mention another group of seals of the Early Dynastic I period, the so-called "city" seals from Ur.<sup>29</sup> A close look reveals that their rather clumsy appearance results from the fact that cuneiform signs, here the names of cities, are engraved on seals seemingly with the exclusive use of the cutting wheel.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, we do not have a single original seal of this group and the impressions very often are quite shallow, but the uniform width of the lines, which contradicts the very nature of cuneiform writing, points very strongly to the use of this tool. This should be taken as further evidence in the argument that these seals were collective or institutional seals.<sup>31</sup>

The need for collective seals apparently diminished with time since for Early Dynastic II we have little that could be called by this term. Though we cannot yet explain this lack it certainly reflects a change in the economic system and its needs, shown particularly by the beginning and increasing use of inscriptions on seals. As this further means of identification certainly is the most universal one, easily understood by everyone able to read, the introduction of inscriptions on seals probably was the solution to the problem that the area of circulation of the sealed items became larger than the area of the economic system. It thus probably is no coincidence that seal inscriptions appear at a time of increasingly far-reaching exchange and of the first attempts to unite larger areas politically.

With the changing economic system, growing social stratification, and especially the growing administration in the incipient states, the general situation of the purpose and employment of the seals became much more complicated. The growing use of inscriptions on seals allows us new avenues of investigation. The whole approach for the later periods of Babylonian history must be a completely different one from the one employed here.

#### NOTES

1. Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, pp. 1ff.
2. The other explanations, viewing seals as amulets or as property marks, seem to take into account only one possible aspect, and do not fit all aspects.
3. Note the imprints of stamp seals on jar-covers in Susa Level 25; see A. Le Brun, "Recherches stratigraphiques à l'Acropole de Suse 1969-1971," *Cahiers de la Délégation Archéologique Française en Iran* 1 (1971), p. 170.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 169ff.
5. E. Porada, "Relative Chronology of Mesopotamia I," in *Chronologies in Old World Archaeology*, ed., R. Ehrich (Chicago, 1965), pp. 154f.

6. B. Hrouda, *Mesopotamien, Iran und Anatolien 1*, Handbuch der Archäologie (Munich, 1971), p. 85. See also the "explanation" that "right from the beginning it [the cylinder seal] reflected the Sumerian character to an extraordinary extent and remained forever true to the culture imprinted by the Sumerian spirit," A. Moortgat, *The Art of Ancient Mesopotamia* (London, 1969), p. 9.
7. H. J. Nissen, "Zur Frage der Arbeitsorganisation in Babylonien während der Späturuk-Zeit," *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft im alten Vorderasien* (Budapest, 1976), pp. 5-14.
8. See Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, pl. 3.
9. See Frankfort, *Stratified Cylinder Seals*, pl. 8, or Porada, *Corpus*, pl. 3. For a discussion of the various tools see Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, p. 5.
10. The use of the cutting wheel is mentioned already in W. H. Ward, *The Seal Cylinders of Western Asia* (Washington, 1910), pp. 9f., and Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, p. 5, but is restricted to the time from the Kassite Period onwards.
11. See Moortgat, *Rollsiegel*, pl. 2, nos. 7 and 9.
12. See H. E. Wulff, *The Traditional Crafts of Persia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1966), p. 39, fig. 48.
13. For a summary with cautionary remarks see E. Porada, "Relative Chronology," p. 153.
14. H. J. Nissen, "Grabung in den Quadraten K/L XII in Uruk-Warka," *Bagh. Mitt.* 5 (1970), pp. 132ff.
15. H. J. Nissen, "The City Wall of Uruk," in *Man, Settlement, and Urbanism*, ed. P. Ucko, R. Tringham, and G. Dimbleby (London, 1972), pp. 794ff.
16. The publication has been announced as "appearing within a short time" from 1965 on. See H. J. Lenzen, *UVB* 21 (1965), p. 29.
17. P. P. Delougaz, "Some New Evidence Pertaining to Cultural Relations between Sites in Southwestern Iran and Southern Mesopotamia in the Protoliterate Period," in *Memorial Volume of the Fifth International Congress of Iranian Art and Archaeology* (Tehran, 1972), p. 27, and pls. 9 and 10.
18. D. Sürenhagen and E. Töpperwein, "Kleinfunde," in E. Heinrich et al., *Vierter vorläufiger Bericht über die . . . in Habuba Kabira . . . und in Mumbaqt . . . unternommen archäologischen Untersuchungen*, *MDOG* 105 (1973), pp. 20-33 and figs. 4-9.
19. Delougaz, "New Evidence," p. 30, pl. 9; Sürenhagen and Töpperwein, "Kleinfunde," p. 21, figs. 4 and 5.
20. Delougaz, "New Evidence," p. 27; Sürenhagen and Töpperwein, "Kleinfunde," p. 21.
21. Porada, "Relative Chronology," p. 155.
22. For further references see Nissen, "Arbeitsorganisation."
23. See for instance "temple and flock" and "fishes" on Frankfort, *Stratified Cylinder Seals*, no. 31.
24. Nissen, "Arbeitsorganisation."
25. For previous suggestions of this notion see L. Le Breton, "The Early Periods at Susa: Mesopotamian Relations," *Iraq* 19 (1957), p. 105, n. 2. This was also noted by T. Beran, "Gesellschaftliche Veränderungen im Spiegel der Kunst: Uruk IV/Gemdet Nasr Zeit," in *Gesellschaftsklassen im Alten Zweistromland und in den angrenzenden Gebieten: XVIII Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*, München, ed. D. O. Edzard (Munich, 1972), p. 30, who, however, still maintaining the idea of the foreign origin of the Jamdat Nasr groups, reached the conclusion that the simple-pattern seals were the private, individual seals!
26. D. P. Hansen, "Some Early Dynastic Sealings from Nippur," in *Studies Presented to George M. A. Hanfmann* (Fogg Art Museum-Harvard University Monographs in Art and Archaeology 2), ed. D. G. Mitten, J. G. Pedley, and J. A. Scott (Mainz, 1971), pls. 17ff.

27. E. Porada, "Relative Chronology," p. 160.
28. Frankfort, *Stratified Cylinder Seals*, pp. 21ff.
29. Legrain, *UE 3*, pls. 21-26.
30. Another explanation was mentioned by E. Porada during the discussion of this paper. She suggested that the original seals were wooden balls with the signs engraved by means of trough-shaped cutting tools. However, the fact that the impressions (Legrain, *UE 3*, pls. 53ff.) show flat or even slightly convex surfaces and that the dividing lines between the "cases" (e.g., on nos. 429ff.) run exactly parallel to each other, seems to contradict the idea of the use of balls. But even if she is correct, my main argument would still stand as this way of producing seals certainly would be much quicker and cheaper than the mode of production used for the well-cut seals.
31. T. Jacobsen, "Early Political Development in Mesopotamia," *ZA* 52 (1957), pp. 9ff.

## New Tricks for Old Seals: A Progress Report\*

by

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In recent years, there has been an increased interest among archaeologists in the origin and development of social complexity. This concern has naturally led to questions about how the earliest civilizations were organized and what kinds of social differentiation were employed. Even before the unification by Sargon of Akkad, the Sumerian city-states were run by complex and interlocking sets of socioeconomic hierarchies dominated by the great manorial organizations of royal houses, temples and large private landowners.<sup>1</sup> But, as Adams<sup>2</sup> and others have pointed out, we know very little about the developmental stages in the formation of these hierarchies and how they actually functioned. The little which is known comes mainly from texts. This meager information, however, may be slightly supplemented through archaeological analyses, especially by tapping the tremendous store of data deposited in burials.

By the time an adult dies, he has usually collected a diverse range of social identities or roles. Cross-cultural analyses have demonstrated that many of these roles are important in burial rites and that often they are symbolized or recorded in the artifacts placed with the deceased.<sup>3</sup> For this exercise, it will be assumed that Sumerian society equipped burials with many material symbols and attributes of the deceased's earthly rank and function.

Although the potential for studying different social roles through burials has been recognized for some time, few attempts have been made to exploit such information in the Near East. This may be largely attributed to the importance attached to the dating of materials from burials. The result has been the interpretation of burials, and many other kinds of data, primarily in terms of their temporal attributes. Variables which change through time have been studied more than those which relate to functional variability at any one period of time. Thus, we lack information on spatial-functional variability which could indicate socioeconomic differentiation at critical points in the cultural sequence. Adams has noted that for periods like the last phase of the Early Dynastic, when it is assumed that religious organizations were powerful in economic spheres, "the graves of specialists associated with the temple are unknown, or at least unrecognized, eliminating a valuable potential source of insight into their status."<sup>4</sup> This lament is equally applicable to other institutions besides the temple.

In 1939 Henri Frankfort produced a remarkable synthesis which ordered cylinder seals temporally in terms of formal distributions of art styles.<sup>5</sup> From that point on, seals have been of great value in placing burials in a temporal context. To arrive at his sequence, Frankfort considered many possible variables which could vary significantly with time. In this process he rejected the design subject as a useful time indicator. The function of seal subjects in Sumerian society, therefore, has usually been ignored because it was not germane to problems of chronology. It has been a common assumption that seal subjects functioned as idiosyncratic markers used for personalized identification. It seems only reasonable, however, that certain occupations, especially those with special administrative authority within institutionalized

hierarchies, would have found seals with specific identifying designs more useful as signets of their offices than as personal markers. The obvious duplications in seal subjects raise the possibility that scenes varied within a period due to social structure and, as Nissen proposes (elsewhere in this volume), functioned as signets for persons representing various types of institutions. This suggestion does not add new factors to the temporal typologies of seals, but it does open a new dimension of seal variation for analysis.

In 1967, J. H. Humphries<sup>6</sup> proposed a similar type of function for Early Dynastic III seals from Ur burials.<sup>7</sup> He noted that seal scenes from that period could easily be divided into minor variations of three or four themes and were, therefore, not highly individualistic. In addition, Humphries<sup>8</sup> found that in Ur burials seals usually occurred with stick pins close to a skeleton's right shoulder, suggesting that "at least at Ur the usual manner of wearing or carrying a cylinder seal was suspended from a shoulder pin which fastened one's robes together." In other words, Humphries felt that seals may have functioned as much as overt markers of specific statuses as they functioned as signets.

This proposition led Humphries to a reevaluation of seal data. He started his analysis with a typology of seal subjects which included contest seals (scenes showing the defense of domesticated animals against carnivores by humans or other-worldly beings; animals attacked by other animals; or human heroes, demons, or bullmen struggling with lions or bulls) and banquet seals (scenes showing banquets; one or more persons being waited upon or drinking; or two or more persons who appear to be conferring). A review of the context of seals in Early Dynastic III burials at Ur led to several tentative propositions.

The male attendants in the Royal Tombs and the king's offering of weapons were associated with shell seals and seals with contest scenes. Similarly, in the graves from Pit X, shell seals correlated with graves containing weapons.<sup>9</sup>

It was therefore suggested that shell cylinder seals bearing contest scenes were amulets or insignia associated with the men of the city capable of bearing arms or serving the ruler.

Several seals with banquet scenes were found in the Royal Tombs alongside female attendants and the Queen herself. These scenes were largely restricted in distribution to the Royal Tombs and were mainly carved in lapis-lazuli, a material with heavy status overtones. This led to the suggestion that these seals functioned as court insignia or the insignia of certain leading ladies and their servants.<sup>10</sup>

Following Humphries' lead, I initiated a project to demonstrate that the distributions of seal scenes and of artifacts within burials are interrelated. The basic proposition of the paper is that during a time period (such as Early Dynastic III), when several distinct scenes were simultaneously being reproduced, seal scenes were primarily distributed in graves on the basis of specific roles or functions within socioeconomic systems which required the use of signets or insignia, and only secondarily on the basis of whim or personal scene preferences. This study will focus on seal design subjects as opposed to the clearly identified styles of manufacture which have led to tight temporal seriations. Early Dynastic III as a whole, not subdivided, will be considered as the time frame.

If this paper's central proposition is correct, specific subjects should correlate in a systematically patterned way with specific types of functional and status-marker grave goods. For example, in Woolley's report there were 35 burials with seals that also contained solid gold objects. The individuals so interred obviously held a special status in access to material resources and possibly in regard to political, economic and other kinds of power. Do the seals themselves give any indication of the special rank of these burials?

At the simplest level, the type of material from which seals are carved is indicative of other burial attributes. Woolley identifies 14 kinds of materials utilized for seal-manufacture; nevertheless, 31 of the

35 burials with solid gold objects contained one or more seals made of lapis-lazuli. But this is not a surprising conclusion. Someone who could afford gold objects could also afford lapis seals.

What is of interest is that the seal scene is an equally potent indicator of gold objects. There is a strong association between gold objects and banquet seals. In fact, if a burial contains gold and a seal, there is better than a 50% chance that the seal will depict a banquet scene; if a seal burial contains 3 or more gold objects, the chances are better than 8 out of 10 that the burial will have a banquet scene seal.

Reticules provide another example of differential distribution. Twenty-six burials with seals had reticules. If the seals were randomly distributed with reticules in the Early Dynastic III Ur burials, 59% of the associated seals would have contest scenes and 18% would have banquet scenes. However, in these burials, 9 out of 10, or 88%, were found with contest scenes; less than 8% occurred with banquet seals.

These kinds of data, which support a correlation between seal subject and other items in burials, have led to a planned computer study of graves in the Near East.<sup>11</sup> Detailed analyses are not completed, but a few examples can be given to illustrate the potential for future studies. For this brief report, burial items were simply grouped into analysis units by general categories of material (gold, silver, copper, and mixed-material objects) and form, as follows:

Clothing Ornaments: rosettes, ribbon, chain, brim, roundels, bangles.

Head Ornaments: ear-rings, head-dresses, wreaths, headbands.

Neck Ornaments: beads, necklaces, pendants.

Body Ornaments: belt-rings, toe-rings, bracelets, rings, girdles.

Personal Implements: drinking tubes, toilet sets, pins, mirrors, tweezers, combs.

Containers: clay, copper, gold, or silver vessels and reticules.

Tools: saws, rivets, awls, choppers, borers, fish gaffs, spoons, fish-hooks, lamps, needles, razors, nails, adzes, chisels, drills.

Weapons: axes, knives, daggers, spears and spear butts, arrows, mace heads.

Once the Early Dynastic III Ur burials as defined by Nissen<sup>12</sup> were recorded by type of materials and form of grave goods, banquet seals and contest seals were chosen for detailed comparison. In order to relate specific seal scene to associated grave goods, only those burials with just one seal subject were analyzed for this report.

Clearly, different types of items are associated with contest and banquet seals (see table I and fig. 1). Banquet seals are distributed with a wide variety of ornaments and few functional objects; contest seals occur with few ornaments but many containers, tools and weapons. Contest seals are associated with copper items; banquet seals are found with many more gold, silver, and mixed-material items. A standard chi square test with 10 degrees of freedom indicated that the differences between the two burial samples were so great that there is substantially less than a 1% probability that these differences were the result of chance.

Most banquet seals are carved in lapis; many contest seals are shell. Just to check the accuracy of the banquet vs. contest comparison, all lapis contest scene burials were lumped to see if they had significantly different contexts from shell contest scene burials (table I and fig. 1). In fact, they did not. A chi square test showed that there was a 90% probability that the differences between lapis contest scene burials and burials with contest scenes carved in other materials were due to chance. In contrast, another standard chi square test with 10 degrees of freedom indicated that the differences between banquet seal

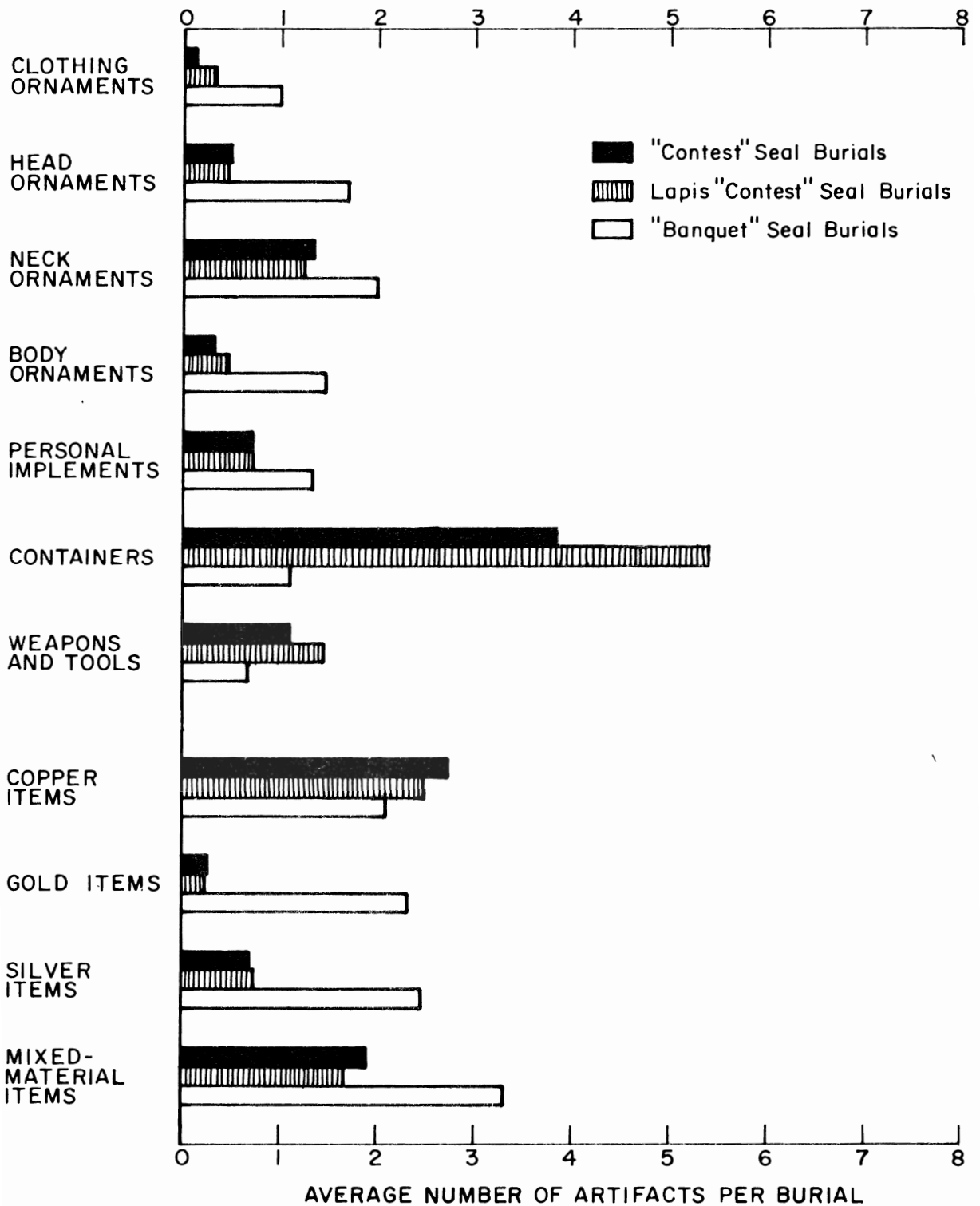


Figure 1.

Artifacts in contest and banquet seal burials (see tables I and III)



burials and lapis contest seal burials had substantially less than a 1% probability of being the result of chance. Thus, there seem to be significant differences in the types of items placed with contest and banquet seal burials.

**Table I**  
Objects Associated with  
Early Dynastic III Contest and Banquet Seal Burials from Ur

Contest Seal Burials			
	All Materials Including Lapis (25) <sup>a</sup>	Lapis (8) <sup>a</sup>	“Banquet” seal Burials (24) <sup>a</sup>
Clothing ornaments	3 <sup>b</sup>	3 <sup>b</sup>	24 <sup>b</sup>
Head ornaments	12	4	40
Neck ornaments	35	10	52
Body ornaments	8	4	34
Personal implements	20	7	33
Containers	95	43	25
Tools and weapons	28	13	16
Copper items	68	20	50
Gold items	6	2	56
Silver items	19	7	58
Mixed-material items	50	14	79

Note: Burials used for this table are the following (Woolley’s burial numbers [UE 2]; note that some burials contain more than one individual and each individual was given a number, e.g. 1237-17; asterisks indicate presence of a lapis seal): a) contest scene burials (25 burials): 43, 160, 165\*, 168, 219\*, 261, 288\*, 326, 362, 482\*, 743, 779-A, 789-13, 792, 800-18, 895, 1194, 1243, 1322, 1385, 1404\*, 1407\*, 1412\*, 1586, 1753; b) banquet seal burials (24 burials): 15, 37, 55, 221, 263, 337, 357, 381, 789-30, 789-31, 1136, 1187, 1237-7, 1237-17, 1237-60, 1237-61, 1237-69, 1312, 1315, 1332, 1625, 1749, 1750, 1774.

<sup>a</sup>Total number of burials.

<sup>b</sup>Number of objects of a type within a group of burials.

Although these data are only tentative indications, contest scene interments, with their high occurrence of functional items, may represent individuals who held low-level positions with administrative duties in economic and military hierarchies; banquet scene burials, with their substantial quantities of adornments made of exotic resources, may in time identify administrators or agricultural managers in a powerful temple or court hierarchy.

Banquet seals are especially important to study in relation to questions about hierarchies because they were all deposited during a relatively short period and because of their tight internal correlation in size, material composition, and location. For example, the variability around the average seal length is much more restricted for banquet than for other scenes. No more than 45% of any other seal scene are cut from only one material; 80% of the banquet scenes are made of lapis. Also of note is the banquet scene's restriction to Royal Tombs and burials immediately adjacent to them. This is a much more limited distribution than found for most other seal subjects. This tight clustering suggests that these seals may have been used within a single institution. If this were the case, minor variations within this scene and variations in accompanying grave goods might identify different roles and hierarchies within that institution.

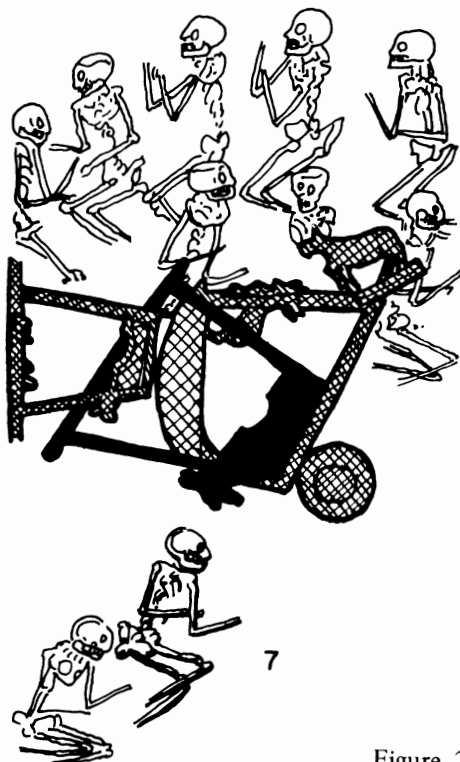


Figure 2  
A part of "The Great Death-Pit" of Ur showing individual no. 7. The gold lyre is filled in in black. After UE 2, pl. 71.



Figure 3  
Seal associated with individual no. 7.  
After UE 2, pl. 194.

Banquet seals can be divided between those with only banquet scenes (called banquet seals here) and those with both a banquet and an animal register (called animal register seals here). Is there a difference in associated artifacts? A look at grave goods shows that both sets of burials contain different quantities of tools and weapons (see table II). The banquet set includes only three tools and weapons; the animal register set has thirteen. The two sets are more distinct in another area—containers. The animal register set has double the number of containers found with the banquet set; but beyond this, the pots are of different forms and sizes. Pots found with banquet seals tend to occur in the form of bowls and a few small jars. Pots with animal register seals are larger in size and are often jar forms. Another chi square test with 10 degrees of freedom indicated that the differences between the two burial samples were large enough that there was less than a 1% probability that they were the result of chance.

Based on these differences, it may be suggested that banquet seals identify persons involved in internal court service and animal register seals may signify functionaries involved in court and public economics. The contrast between a court steward and an agricultural administrator for the court is an example of the proposed distinction. Obviously, many more speculations are possible and all must be subjected to rigorous examination in the future. Such speculations are, however, of peripheral interest to the indication that specific artifact sets and specific seal designs seem to be correlated in their distribution in burials. It is from this position that archaeologists, with their quantitative descriptions of grave goods and associated seals, look to philologists and other specialists for aid and advice in reconstructing early state hierarchies.

One final illustration of the relation between seal scene and associated artifacts provides a suitable close for this initial study. Burial 1237 at Ur was appropriately named "The Great Death-pit"—a mass burial of more than

seventy individuals. Individual number 7 was found lying beside a large bull-effigy lyre.<sup>13</sup> The seal found with individual 7 has two registers.<sup>14</sup> Above is a banquet scene. Below is a procession; the central figure in the procession carries a large bull-effigy lyre (fig. 3).

**Table II**  
Two Types of Early Dynastic III  
Banquet Seal Burials from Ur

	Banquet Seal Burials (10) <sup>a</sup>	Animal Register Seal Burials (10) <sup>a</sup>
Clothing ornaments	10 <sup>b</sup>	14 <sup>b</sup>
Head ornaments	17	13
Neck ornaments	15	24
Body ornaments	2	14
Personal implements	14	14
Containers	20	41
Tools and weapons	3	13
Copper items	17	25
Gold items	12	37
Silver items	21	23
Mixed-material items	22	38

Note: Burials used for this table are the following (Woolley's burial numbers [UE 2]; note that some burials contain more than one individual): a) banquet only (10 burials): 15, 221, 337, 789-31, 1237-17, 1237-69, 1315, 1332, 1750, 1774; b) banquet plus animal register (10 burials): 37, 55, 357, 381, 789-30, 1136, 1187, 1237-61, 1312, 1625. The following are not included in this list either because damage did not allow the subtype to be determined or because they have a second register which is not strictly banqueting or an animal scene: 263, 1237-7, 1237-60, 1749.

<sup>a</sup>Total number of burials

<sup>b</sup>Number of objects of a type within a group of burials

#### NOTES

\* I wish to express my gratitude to Jim Humphries, whose original work prompted this study, and to McGuire Gibson, John Justeson, Norman Yoffee, Aline Luthi, Sue Millet, and Laurie Warner for their considerable aid during its preparation. The illustrations were drawn by Charles Sternberg.

1. I. M. Diakonoff, ed., *Ancient Mesopotamia* (Moscow, 1969).

2. Robert McC. Adams, *The Evolution of Urban Society* (Chicago, 1966).
3. J. A. Brown, ed., *Approaches to the Social Dimensions of Mortuary Practices*, *Memoirs of the Society for American Archaeology*, no. 25 (1971).
4. Adams, *The Evolution of Urban Society*, p. 127.
5. Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*.
6. Humpries, "Some Early Dynastic Seals from Mesopotamia" (unpublished manuscript, Peabody Museum Library, Harvard University, 1967).
7. L. Woolley, UE 2.
8. Humpries, "Seals," p. 10.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
11. An initial programming and analysis of Ur Cemetery material was made in 1972 with M. Gibson at the University of Arizona. This attempt was aimed at showing different degrees of social mobility between the late Early Dynastic, Early Sargonic, and Late Sargonic graves. Although distinct differences did emerge, the analysis technique was just being developed and findings were not as clear-cut as would be desired. Gibson reported on this analysis at the American Anthropological Association meetings in New York, December, 1972 (unpublished).
12. H. J. Nissen, *Zur Datierung des Königsfriedhofes von Ur, unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Stratigraphie der Privatgräber* (Bonn, 1966).
13. UET 2, pl. 71.
14. *Ibid.*, pl. 194, U. 12374.

## **The Sargonic Royal Seal: A Consideration of Sealing in Mesopotamia**

by

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Although there exist no examples of the seal of any of the kings of the Sargonic period (2334-2154 B.C.), there are known from that time roughly twenty-five seals which carry inscriptions of the general type “royal name, personal name, his servant” (RN PN arad/arád-da-ni or arad/arád-zu), in which the royal name is that of a king (table I).<sup>1</sup> A seal impression on a bulla from Adab (A-9a-b) bears an inscription of this type.<sup>2</sup> It reads, “Sharkalisharri, king of Agade, Kirbanum, the scribe, (is) his servant.”

On the surface, at least, this seal inscription and seal inscriptions of the same general type seem to imply that the last named individual has the right to seal only in his capacity as servant or retainer of the king. I would hypothesize that seals bearing such inscriptions are seals of office. Certain factors would seem to corroborate such a hypothesis. For example, Lugal-ushumgal, governor of Lagash, had two different seals (A-10a-d, A-11a-b), though with closely related scenes, under Naram-Sin and Sharkalisharri. It is conceivable that a king presented such a seal to an official on his appointment or in some other manner controlled the distribution of such seals. If indeed this was the case, seals with such an inscription should represent a unity, a royal seal type.

Nikolaus Schneider has termed seals with an arad/arád-zu inscription type Widmungssiegel or “dedicatory” seals, such terminology seemingly implying that the seal was cut by an official out of homage or respect for the king.<sup>3</sup> It is my contention that the flow of these seals was from king to official and not from official to king.

As a partial test of my hypothesis, I have gathered together these so-called dedicatory seals and compared them with seals of inscription types PN; PN Scribe; and PN plus title/profession (other than scribe). I have studied each group of seals, giving close scrutiny to quality and certain other features of cutting, as well as range of subject matter. I am aware of the limitations of this study. The number of seals on which it is based is quite inadequate, some twenty-five “dedicatory” seals and perhaps one hundred twenty-five seals of the personal category. I have sought to compensate for this numerical imbalance by considering each group of personal seals separately; consequently, for example, I have compared twenty-five “dedicatory” seals with sixty seals of inscription type PN, forty-five of inscription type PN plus title/profession (other than scribe), and twenty of inscription type PN Scribe.

Sargonic seals and impressions which bear only a personal name range in quality from very fine to sketchily done (A-12a), and number approximately sixty. Of these, thirty present animal combat scenes in what, for ease of reference, I will term the “standard Sargonic manner,” i.e., two pairs of combatants flanking an encased, vertical inscription (A-12b). Presentation scenes, i.e., any scene in which a human figure accompanied by an interceding deity stands before a seated or standing deity, occur on perhaps five seals and impressions of this inscription type. The remaining twenty-five have a wide range of subject matter. One, Buchanan no. 344 (A-12c) depicts a worshipper before a snake god. This is the

only example known to me of a seal with snake deity plus inscription. Boehmer no. 1683 is a plowing scene, while Boehmer no. 934 depicts a weather deity, i.e., a god on the back of a winged beast. Boehmer no. 1032 portrays Shamash rising from mountains flanked by gates and gatekeepers, and no. 1531 depicts a figure before what appears to be a fire altar.

On certain of the seals bearing personal names, the inscriptions appear to have been added after the seal was made. For instance, Boehmer no. 1084 has the inscription cut across the right arm of the introducing deity.

**Table I**  
Sargonic "Royal" Seals

Royal Name	Boehmer Catalogue Number	Personal Name	Type of Scene
Naram-Sin	no. 603	Sharishtakal	standard combat
Naram-Sin	no. 645	unknown	standard combat
Naram-Sin	no. 699	Shuilishu	standard combat
Naram-Sin	no. 695	unknown	standard combat
Naram-Sin	no. 1045	Lugalushumgal	presentation
Naram-Sin	no. 1267	Nasha	presentation
Naram-Sin	no. 763	Ukinulmash*	standard combat
Naram-Sin	no. 1511	unknown**	presentation?
Sharkalisharri	no. 646	Shibanum	standard combat
Sharkalisharri	no. 647	Adda	standard combat
Sharkalisharri	no. 724	Ibnisharrum	non-violent flanking pairs
Sharkalisharri	no. 747	unknown	standard combat
Sharkalisharri	no. 688	Lugalish	standard combat
Sharkalisharri	no. 1046	Lugalushumgal	presentation
Dudu	no. 1457	Amarmush	presentation?
Shudurul	no. 771	unknown	variation on flanking pairs
Shudurul	no. 770	unknown	standard combat
unmentioned	no. 567	unknown	standard combat
unmentioned	no. 604	unknown	standard combat

\* This seal bears an inscription of the type RN PN dumu-zu. For the sake of completeness I have listed it here.

\*\* The exact inscription type of this seal is unknown.

The characteristics of this group of seals seem to be found as well in those with inscription types PN Scribe and PN plus title/profession (other than scribe). In the case of seals and impressions with the legend type PN Scribe, for example, the standard Sargonic animal combat occurs on roughly one-half of the examples. Along with this standard representation occur a number of other varieties of animal combat. Boehmer no. 694 depicts the triumph of a single hero over two lions; no. 674 has not two, but three pairs of combatants; and no. 700, from Tell el-Wilayah, has four pairs of combatants, two on each side of the seal legend. Scribes' seals have a wider range of subject matter than combat scenes, however. Five deities, including Ea and Shamash, appear on Boehmer no. 945. On no. 948 again deities are depicted, but with a realistically rendered palm tree. Presentation scenes occur on scribes' seals (B-1a), but Boehmer no. 950 presents, in addition to the presentation scene, what I presume to be two confronting deities.

As with seals bearing only personal names, PN Scribe seals cover the quality spectrum from the very highest-caliber cutting (B-1b) through the mediocre (B-2a) to the unimpressive (Boehmer no. 694).

D. O. Edzard has dealt at length with professions mentioned in seal inscriptions of the type PN plus title/profession (other than scribe).<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that there appears to be no obvious correspondence between the scene represented on a seal and a particular profession. Besides the standard animal combat (here occurring on perhaps half of the examples) and presentation scenes, a wide range of subject matter appears on these professionals' seals. Boehmer no. 1128, Shamash in a god-boat, is a representation that rarely appears in conjunction with an inscription. Boehmer no. 1692 has a hunt scene while Boehmer no. 1682 depicts a plowing scene.

As in the two categories previously considered, professionals' seals vary in quality. Boehmer no. 729 is one of the finest Sargonic seals. Boehmer no. 790 is late and sketchily done.

On certain of these professionals' seals the inscription does not appear properly part of the composition. For example, on Boehmer no. 1692 it appears to have been squeezed in between the hunter and the animals.

The subject matter of the "dedicatory" seals with royal names (e.g., A-9) appears severely restricted vis à vis seals of inscription categories considered above. The great majority of the seals and impressions with inscription type RN PN arad/arád-zu present the standard Sargonic animal combat or closely related scenes in which the flanking pairs are non-violent in nature. For instance, Boehmer no. 724 (B-2b), a well-known Sargonic seal, shows, on each side of a framed legend, a kneeling, six-locked hero holding a flowing vase from which a water buffalo drinks. Five seals of this category are presentation scenes.

One group of Sargonic seals must be considered a subtype of the "royal seal," namely those which bear the inscription type RN-1 (the king) RN-2 PN arad/arád-zu/za or arad/arád-da-ni (table II). Though the king (Naram-Sin or Sharkalisharri) is mentioned first, the seal owner is actually the servant of the second-mentioned royal person, some member of the royal family. Seals with this type of inscription occur with the standard animal combat scene (Boehmer no. 644, and Boehmer no. 560 [B-3a-b]),<sup>5</sup> but there are two sealings with unusual motives. One, Boehmer no. 1694 (B-4a), has a seated god with a crescent-capped mitre facing a seated goddess. They are accompanied by servant deities. The seal belongs to a servant of Enmenanna, en-priestess of the moon god and daughter of Naram-Sin. The seated goddess may be Enmenanna herself confronting the moon god. The other sealing, Boehmer no. 1513 (B-4b-d), is from the seal of Dada, servant of Tudasharlibish, wife of Sharkalisharri. It shows a seated woman before whom stands a man cut on a much smaller scale. The inscription is divided into a number of cases which appear carefully placed in the field. It cannot be accidental that the name of Dada, the servant, is on the base line directly behind the man, while the name Tudasharlibish is directly behind the seated woman. I would suggest that these two seals are extraordinary and specific to two individuals, perhaps an attempt at portraiture, and in the latter seal a depiction of a relationship between the seal-bearer and his lady.

**Table II**  
Sargonic "Royal" Seal Subtype

Royal Name-1	Boehmer Catalogue Number	Royal Name-2	Personal Name	Type of Scene
Naram-Sin	no. 644	Binkalisharri (son of Naram-Sin)	Abishar	standard combat
Naram-Sin	no. 1694	Enmenanna (daughter of Naram-Sin)	Lu-x-x-x	seated god and goddess
Sharkalisharri	no. 1513	Tudasharlibish (wife of Sharkalisharri)	Dada	man before seated lady
Sharkalisharri	no. 560	Tudasharlibish	Isharbeli	standard combat

The interpretation of these seal legends as indicating that the seal-bearer was the servant not of the king but of the second-named royal personage rests on Boehmer no. 560. The inscription on this impression reads, "Sharkalisharri, king of Agade, Tudasharlibish the lady, Isharbeli, the scribe, šabra of her house, (is) her servant." The pronominal suffix for "her" certainly cannot be taken as referring to Sharkalisharri. Additionally, the reading arád-za (her servant) is a strong argument in favor of reading these seal inscriptions as Akkadian (as mentioned in n. 1 above).

Seals and impressions of the "dedicatory" type which mention the king vary little in terms of quality. Even a cursory glance will reveal a uniform excellence (B-5a-d, B-6a-b, B-7a).

Although there are about 15 seals of servants of individuals other than the king or his close relatives, I must emphasize that only those bearing kings' names are of uniform excellence. Boehmer no. 634, for example, a seal whose inscription reads, "Lú-dingir-ra, sanga of Isin,<sup>7</sup> Lú-dingir-ra, the scribe, (is) his servant," is of only mediocre quality (relatively speaking), as witness the spindly limbs of the hero.

Earlier, I had hypothesized that seals having a legend of the general type RN PN arad/arád-zu/za were actually seals of office, perhaps given by the king to his principal retainers; consequently, I believed, these seals ought to form some sort of unity, a royal seal type. In relation to other groups of inscribed seals, and indeed in terms of the Sargonic seal repertoire as a whole, these seals seem to constitute a group apart. They are more likely to have the standard Sargonic combat scene than are scribes' seals or professionals' seals or seals bearing only a personal name. The range of subject matter of this group of arad/arád-zu seals is markedly restricted vis-à-vis other inscribed seals. Only the standard animal combats or closely related scenes and presentation scenes occur on such seals. These seals appear well-planned. Never, for example, does the inscription appear to be an afterthought. Finally, all are of uniformly high quality. These facts argue for the existence of a Sargonic royal seal type.

If the kings did not directly dispense seals to their officials, there at least must have been some control or restriction on the type of seal a king's retainer could use. It seems probable that there was a single seal-cutting shop which produced these royal seals (and perhaps a limited number of other people's, e.g., the elite's, seals). The use of this shop was perhaps restricted.<sup>8</sup>



I would now like to discuss the use of these royal seals and in general the function of sealing in the Sargonic period. Most of the royal seals have been found in the form of impressions rolled on roughly oval or circular, flat pieces of clay. Bullae bearing royal seals come from several sites in Mesopotamia: Adab, Tello, the Diyala mounds, and Gasur. They almost always feature cord marks and are sealed on both sides and frequently on the edges. Although the full scene is not always impressed on the bullae, the inscription certainly is. Occasionally, there is beside the seal impression a brief cuneiform inscription. Several such inscribed bullae from Tello, for example read "to/for Lugalushumgal."<sup>9</sup> Another bulla from Tello carries a rather lengthy inscription, not easily readable. The inscription seems to contain no more information than personal names, titles, geographical names, and perhaps contents.<sup>10</sup> On a bulla from Gasur are the words for "sesame" and "remainder."<sup>11</sup>

In Mesopotamia jars were stoppered with clay on which seals were impressed. Royal seals are found on such jar sealings. The above-discussed bullae, however, were not so used. I would suggest that they served a function similar to modern mailing labels. Perhaps they hung from the end of a cord (cord marks seldom run completely through the bullae), the other end being fastened around the container. That they hung loose would account for the flat shape of the bullae and the fact that they were sealed on both sides and edges. The destination or character of the package to which they were attached could easily have been written on the bullae.

At Tello were found two sealed but uninscribed clay tablets,<sup>12</sup> lacking any indication (string or cord marks) that they might have been bullae. A similar example, Buchanan no. 298, was found at Umm el-Jerab (B-7b). These may represent trial rollings. But it may be that these sealings were carried by an agent for the king or other official to prove the authority of a verbal message.

While seals certainly occurred on inscribed tablets in earlier periods and were very frequently used on texts of Ur III date, fewer than ten sealed tablets are known from the Sargonic period. The rare sealed tablets appear to be administrative and/or legal in nature. Four texts of unknown or uncited provenience record the delivery of goats, sheep, and lambs, and are impressed with a seal showing non-violent pairs flanking a central inscription. One text, possibly Sargonic, but sealed with a late Early Dynastic animal combat seal, authorizes an issue of grain.<sup>13</sup> One letter from Uruk, which requests a certain item to be given to the sanga, is sealed by the sender with a standard animal combat seal.<sup>14</sup> A letter of unknown provenience, published by Sollberger, is concerned with an adjudication, telling the recipient, one Dudumu, to begin a legal case. The reverse of the tablet is sealed by the sender with a standard animal combat scene.<sup>15</sup> Two tablets with sealings might loosely be termed notices. One of these tablets, from Nippur, records a loan from a man named Shumama.<sup>16</sup> The tablet envelope is sealed by a Sargonic animal combat scene with the inscription, "Ur-Sin, Scribe." Another Sargonic text gives notice to the effect that a certain Ur-Enlil has undergone the water-ordeal. The seal is apparently late Early Dynastic and bears an unreadable inscription.<sup>17</sup>

Little more can be said about sealing, and in particular, the function of the royal seal, in the Sargonic period. Lack of solid archaeological context for sealed bullae and the small number of sealed tablets is unfortunate in view of the great amount of information that might be extracted, for example, from a careful study of the provenience of all bullae sealed by a "royal seal."

In the foregoing pages I have hypothesized and attempted to establish the existence of a royal seal type for the Sargonic period. In doing so I have not considered all possible arguments supportive of my hypothesis. For instance, stylistic analysis of those seals with the standard Sargonic animal combat scene and an inscription of general type RN PN arad/arád-zu/za might yield interesting results. These seals may be the work of one hand or one school. I have also attempted in this essay to place the use of these royal seals in the broader context of sealing in the Sargonic period. If I have accomplished little else, I hope that others will be encouraged to pursue the important questions of access to and function of specific seal types in ancient Mesopotamia.

## NOTES

\*Abbreviations used in this paper other than those of the CAD are as follows: Boehmer = R. M. Boehmer, *Die Entwicklung der Glyptik während der Akkad-Zeit* (Berlin, 1965); Buchanan = Briggs Buchanan, *Catalogue of Ancient Near Eastern Seals in the Ashmolean Museum*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1966); Edzard = Dietz Otto Edzard, "Die Inschriften der Altakkadischen Rollsiegel," *AfO* 22 (1968), pp. 12-20. Specific seals or impressions are cited by reference to Boehmer's catalogue number (pp. 141-92) whenever possible.

I would like to thank Dr. I. J. Gelb, Dr. McGuire Gibson, and William Dodge for their aid and encouragement. Unpublished materials relating to Bismaya are included here with the permission of the Oriental Institute.

1. The question of how the possessive suffix -zu on such seal inscriptions is to be read, whether Sumerian (-zu second person, "your servant") or Akkadian (-sú third person, "his servant") is a difficult one. I have here opted to read all such seal inscriptions as Akkadian primarily on the strength of two seals: Oriental Institute A 1167, which will be discussed below, and a seal pointed out to me by I. J. Gelb (W. Ward, *The Seal Cylinders of Western Asia* [Washington, D.C., 1910], fig. 217) on which occur arád-za and gemé-za respectively, i.e., reading warassa, "her (male) servant" and amassa, "her (female) servant."
2. Ward, *Seal Cylinders*, fig. 47. This bulla is presently in the Oriental Institute (A 917). The seal has been rolled on front, back, and along the edges of the bulla. To the left of the central inscription the seal impression shows a lion in battle against a nude, six-locked hero (?); to the right it shows a lion in battle against a bull-man(?).  
In a popular account of the excavations, Bismya or the Lost City of Adab (New York, 1912), the excavator, Edgar James Banks, states that this bulla came from a brick-paved floor in the so-called Semitic Quarter (cf. pp. 300-01 of that book). Banks, in a report (dated March 1, 1904) to R. F. Harper, states that the sealing was found on February 28, 1904, and that it came from "the court of Palace III less than a meter below the surface . . ." (The III here apparently refers to Mound III on the site plan published on page 152 of his book).
3. Nikolaus Schneider, "Die arad-zu, dumu-ni, und in-na-ba Siegel von Ur III," *Orientalia* N.S. 5 (1936), p. 109.
4. Edzard, pp. 17-19.
5. Ward, *Seal Cylinders*, fig. 48. A 1167. Like A 917 this bulla has been sealed on front, back, and along the edges. The impression shows a nude, six-locked hero on either side of the central inscription. To the left the hero's opponent cannot be distinguished. To the right his opponent is a water buffalo. The inscription is quite clear and may be transliterated as follows: <sup>d</sup>Šar-kà-lí-šàr-ri, lugal, A-ga-dè<sup>ki</sup>, Tu-da-šar-li-bi-iš, nin, I-sar-be-lí, šabra é-ti-sa (?), arád-za. The hand copy published by Ward (from which Edzard apparently made his transliteration) is far from satisfactory. A brief cuneiform notation—[x] EN.LIL<sup>ki</sup>—runs along the edge of the bulla. I am indebted to Dr. Robert Whiting for his aid in reading the bulla and seal impression.  
Banks does not mention this bulla in his published account of the Bismaya excavations, but in a report (dated March 11, 1904), to R. F. Harper states, in connection with excavations on Mound III, "I have also found an impression upon clay of another seal cylinder of Sargon (sic) containing three columns of writing of three lines each, but I am not yet able to copy it. Around the edge of the clay is written EN.LIL<sup>ki</sup> (Nippur) . . ."  
In connection with A 1167, it should be noted that a very well-executed Sargonic cylinder seal published as part of the collection of Musée d'Art et d'Histoire de Genève (Marie-Louise Vollenweider, *Catalogue raisonné des sceaux cylindres et intailles* [Geneva, 1967] no. 31) presents a standard animal combat scene and carries the inscription I-šar-be-lí, arád lugal, i.e., Isharbeli, servant of the king.

6. On all seals/impressions whose inscription names a woman (in either the first or second position), for example Enheduanna or Enmenanna, the reading arad/arad-da-ni, "his/her servant," occurs (Sumerian -ni is the third person, singular, animate possessive suffix; masculine and feminine are not distinguished).
7. J. N. Postgate, "Isin-IN<sup>KI</sup>," *Sumer* 30 (1974), pp. 207-09.
8. Edith Porada ("Gesellschaftsklassen in Werken altorientalischer Kunst," *Gesellschaftsklassen im alten Zweistromland und in den angrenzenden Gebieten—XVIII. Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale*, München, 29. Juni bis 3. Juli 1970, Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse, *Abhandlungen*, n.F. Heft 75 [Munich, 1972], pp. 152-53), using style as a criterion, has argued essentially along the same line.
9. RTC nos. 161, 170.
10. *Ibid.*, no. 176.
11. HSS 10 p. xviii, no. 3.
12. Delaporte, *Catalogue Louvre* 1, T. 76, T. 77.
13. BIN 8 274; 283-85; and 47.
14. UVB 7 pl. 23 W. 15966c.
15. Edmond Sollberger, "Lettre d'époque sargonique," *RA* 40 (1966), p. 71.
16. PBS 9 122.
17. TuM 5 49; Adam Falkenstein, "Eine gesiegelte Tontafel der altsumerische Zeit," *AfO* 14 (1941/44), pp. 333-36. Cf. P. Steinkeller, this volume, note 30.

## Seal Practice in the Ur III Period\*

by

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Seal practice in the Ur III period (ca. 2112-2004 B.C.) has not so far been subjected to systematic study. The only scholar to investigate the function of seals in the Ur III records in some depth was N. Schneider. He devoted two articles to this subject, which, however, are limited in scope to administrative tablets, and his findings are far from conclusive.<sup>1</sup> Apart from that, only a few brief comments on Ur III seal practice can be found in Assyriological literature. A. Falkenstein discussed the use of seals, or rather the lack of it, on court records; the role of seals in letter-orders was treated by E. Sollberger; S. T. Kang paid some attention to seal practice at Drehem; W. W. Hallo commented on the seals of the Umma and Drehem texts; and W. F. Leemans made some general remarks on the application of seals in Ur III records.<sup>2</sup>

This paper does not claim to offer an exhaustive and conclusive analysis of sealing practice. Such an undertaking would necessarily require a systematic study of a very large corpus of sealed tablets, analyzed in the light of their place and function in the archival tradition of the Ur III period; this applies particularly to the administrative texts. Since an investigation of such magnitude is not feasible at the present time, the following discussion is intended merely as a starting point for future studies.

In the first part of my paper I will investigate the distribution and function of seals in different categories of Ur III texts. The following sections will deal with such issues as the discrepancies between seal inscriptions and the content of tablets, the ownership of seals, and the legal significance of the Ur III seal.

### Distribution and Function of Seals in the Ur III Texts

#### Administrative Texts

Seal impressions on administrative texts have a long history of use before Ur III. The earliest examples are from the Uruk IV period (ca. 3300-3100 B.C.), and many specimens are known from the Uruk III (Jamdat Nasr) period.<sup>3</sup> There are, however, no seal impressions attested on the archaic Ur and Fara administrative records (ca. 3000-2600 B.C.). The only examples of sealed documents from the Pre-Sargonic (= Early Dynastic) period are an unsealed tablet with a sealed envelope from Lagash (Pinches Amherst 1) and a sealed tablet of unknown origin (fig. 1, IM 43749, see n. 37). The evidence from Sargonic texts (ca. 2334-2150 B.C.) is equally meager. We can cite here a group of four tablets (BIN 8 274; 283-85) sealed with the same seal, a Nippur text (PBS 9 122), consisting of a tablet and sealed envelope, and a sealed tablet recently acquired by the Oriental Institute (Piepkorn Coll. F-12). To my knowledge, the text Pinches Amherst 1 and the Nippur document mentioned just above are the only specimens of envelopes before the Ur III period.

Ur III administrative texts, in a broad sense of this term, can be subdivided into the following groups: 1) standard administrative texts (ration lists, receipts, disbursements, etc.); 2) bullae; 3) letter-orders.

### STANDARD ADMINISTRATIVE TEXTS

The examination of the major categories of standard administrative texts shows that seal impressions are found almost exclusively on receipts and disbursements, while such categories as ration lists, accounts of various kinds, lists of persons, animals, and commodities, inventories, the so-called "round tablets," and the "messenger texts" were not sealed. Both the tablet and the envelope might be sealed, but seal impressions are more likely to be found on envelopes.

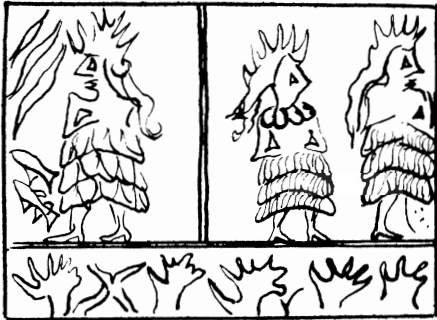


Figure 1. Drawing of sealing on a Pre-Sargonic tablet in the Iraq museum, IM 43749, by M. Matoušová. Scale 1:2.

Seals were rolled most often on receipts, characterized by the use of key words *šu ba-ti*, "he received" (with inanimate object), *ì-dab<sub>5</sub>*, "he received" (with animate object), and *kišib*, "seal (of PN)."<sup>4</sup> The person who receives the goods seals the tablet. As observed by Schneider, if both the tablet and the envelope were prepared, the tablet contains the sentence "PN-2 received from PN," while the envelope reads "from PN; the seal of PN-2" (i.e., received and sealed by PN-2),<sup>5</sup> and it bears the seal impression of PN-2. Note, however, that in some instances "PN-2 received from PN" is followed by the phrase "seal of PN-3," and then *kišib* is to be translated as "certified (by PN-3)" or the like.<sup>6</sup>

Less frequently than on receipts, seal impressions are found on disbursement texts (mostly of Drehem provenience), the key word being *ba-zi*, "it was withdrawn."<sup>7</sup> The usual structure of the sealed *ba-zi* text is: *x* animals / their destination / from PN, were withdrawn / *gìr* PN-2 (may be omitted) / date / seal impression of PN-2.

The understanding of the role of seals in these texts hinges on the proper interpretation of the responsibilities of the *gìr*-functionary, a problem which has created a good deal of controversy among Assyriologists.<sup>8</sup> Following the view that the person designated as *gìr* conveyed the animals or goods from the central office to a specific party,<sup>9</sup> the function of seals in the *ba-zi* texts would be analogous to that in the receipts—the seal was rolled by the person who received the goods in question. This interpretation seems to be supported by the fact that in one text (Nies UDT 4) the person who is designated as *gìr* in the tablet is preceded in the envelope by the term *kišib*, "received and sealed (by PN)."<sup>10</sup> Note also that the phrase *šēp* PN, the Akkadian equivalent of *gìr* PN, has recently been interpreted by M. T. Larsen as "transported by PN."<sup>11</sup> A different interpretation has it that the person who is preceded by the term *gìr* was responsible for the verification of transactions and the correctness of accounts.<sup>12</sup> In light of this theory, which appears to be less convincing than the first interpretation, the rolling of a seal on the disbursement text would signify that the information in it was accurate.

It is not clear why some of the receipts and disbursement texts were sealed and others not. Among the sample of 627 Drehem texts published in BIN 3, which are mostly of *ì-dab<sub>5</sub>*, *šu ba-ti*, *kišib*, *zi-ga*, and *ba-zi* types, seal impressions appear on only 50 *ì-dab<sub>5</sub>*, 17 *šu ba-ti*, 17 *kišib*, 45 *ba-zi*, and no *zi-ga* texts.<sup>13</sup> F. Kraus suggested that the majority of Drehem tablets were stripped of their envelopes at the time of their discovery by looters, and this accounts for the absence of seal impressions on many of these texts.<sup>14</sup>

However, this explanation does not seem to be completely satisfactory, even though it might be true in some cases. According to Kang, the difference between the Drehem kišib texts, which are regularly sealed, and the Drehem šu ba-ti texts, which are generally not sealed,<sup>15</sup> is that the former deal with animals dead from natural causes or accidents, whereas the latter are concerned with animals which most probably were slaughtered.<sup>16</sup> The kišib text “. . . seems to be a more official form which allowed officials who lost animals by misfortune to report the loss and escape later blame; the second party, who sealed the tablets, acted somewhat like a witness or a notary.”<sup>17</sup> The available evidence seems to confirm this contention. However, the same explanation cannot be applied to the Drehem ì-dab<sub>5</sub> texts, which deal with live animals only, and the zi-ga texts, which refer to both live and dead animals. The reason why only certain of these texts were sealed must be due to some other intricacy of the operational system at Drehem.

Another large group of commonly sealed tablets is the Umma texts dealing with workers (guruš [m.] and gemé [f.]) assigned to field and canal works.<sup>18</sup> The general structure of these texts is: x guruš/gemé (paid) per x days / description of the work / ugula (= foreman) PN / kišib PN-2 / gir PN-3 (may be omitted) / date / seal impression of PN-2.

Closely related to this group are the Umma texts of basically the same structure, the only difference being that instead of workers they are concerned with the work done and the time taken for its completion.<sup>19</sup> We are not quite sure what the specific responsibilities were of the person who sealed these two types of records. The most likely interpretation is that he received the wages intended for the workers on a given project. Such an interpretation seems to be confirmed by the fact that some of the texts which omit the kišib phrase are sealed by a person who appears as gir, “the conveyor,” in the document.<sup>20</sup>

It should be noted that in numerous instances a text is sealed by a person other than the official who is expected to seal it. In these cases, the person sealing is either a) another member of the administration or b) a relative of the official in question (most often his son or brother).<sup>21</sup> In such a situation the text very often uses the sentence “in place of PN (the person who is expected to seal the document) the seal of PN-2 (was rolled).”<sup>22</sup> One text contains an interesting variant of this clause, “PN-2, the overseer, rolled the seal of PN-3 in place (of the seal) of PN, the foreman.”<sup>23</sup> PN was responsible for the sealing of the tablet, but PN-2 sealed in his stead using for this purpose a seal of still another individual!

There are also cases where the seal of another person, otherwise not mentioned in the tablet, is impressed in addition to the expected seal.<sup>24</sup> Is this person a superior official who countersigned or endorsed the tablet?

## BULLAE

The practice of sealing clay bullae used for the safeguarding of goods is definitely the oldest and probably the most common application of seals in ancient Mesopotamia. The impressions of unscribed seals on bullae are common by the Late Uruk period, whereas the earliest inscribed seal impressions appear on the archaic Ur tablets. In the subsequent periods (Fara, Pre-Sargonic, Sargonic) sealed bullae are equally well attested.<sup>25</sup>

This practice is continued in the Ur III period. It must be noted, however, that the term “Ur III bullae” is not very precise because under this name are included three different categories of bullae: a) bullae in the strict sense: lumps of clay pressed on the knot of a cord (B-9); b) labels in the shape of tablets with holes showing where cords originally ran through them (B-10-11); c) archive labels (so-called pisan-dub-ba labels, B-12).<sup>26</sup> Only the first two types were sealed.

As in the case of standard administrative records, seal impressions are found on bullae which have the form of receipts (šu ba-ti, ì-dab<sub>5</sub>, and kišib), disbursements (zi-ga), and the Umma texts given above

concerning the canal and field work.<sup>27</sup> Consequently, our comments on the function of seals in the standard administrative texts in general apply also to the bullae.

## LETTER-ORDERS

The earliest examples of sealed letter-orders appear in the Sargonic Period.<sup>28</sup> As might be expected, they are sealed by the senders.

Sealing of the letter-orders by the sender is a regular custom in Ur III times. To quote E. Sollberger, who published a corpus of Ur III letter-orders comprising 373 texts, “. . . the seal-impression served mainly to identify the sender and although only 109 of our letters are actually sealed, every letter, at least in theory, bore a seal-impression either on the tablet itself or on its envelope.”<sup>29</sup>

Three of the extant letters (TCS 1 53, 242, 373) contain the phrase “the seal of PN (i.e., the sender),” while in one case, Forde 55, it is replaced by “the seal of the ensi (governor).”

The fact that the seal impression was an essential part of the letter-order is clearly demonstrated by TCS 1 215, which contains the explanation of the lack of a seal: *kišib sukal-mah nu-me-a-bi*, “the seal of the chancellor was not available.” This sentence also seems to imply that the seal of the *sukal-mah* could have been used by his subordinates when acting on his behalf; this probably applies also to TCS 1 180, 183, 184, and 337, which bear the seal impressions of Arad-Nanna, the *sukal-mah*. Another text, TCS 1 305, pointedly shows that the lack of a seal impression on the letter-order might have raised suspicions regarding its validity: *mu kišib nu-ub-ra-šè na-mi-ib-gur-e*, “he must not argue on the grounds that the seal was not rolled (on this letter).”

## Legal Texts

As far as I know, there are only two examples of sealed legal documents before the Ur III period. One of them is a Pre-Sargonic sale document from Lagash (DP 32), sealed with an uninscribed seal, most probably belonging to the seller (see p. 45). The other text is a Sargonic record of two (?) river ordeal(s) (TuM 5 49). Unfortunately, it cannot be ascertained whether this text was sealed by the official who presided over the ordeal(s) or by one of the parties involved.<sup>30</sup> In addition, we have some indirect evidence for the possible use of a seal in connection with court proceedings. In two Sargonic letters (BIN 8 155, 157), involving the same sender and addressee, the sender supplies the addressee with the names of his adversaries and witnesses, probably requesting that these names be given to the high priest (*sanga*) (BIN 8 155), or to the *GAR-ensi*<sup>31</sup> (BIN 8 157), so that the respective official “should roll a seal (and) judge this legal case” (*kišib hé-ra-ra di-bé di hé-bé*). The implications of *kišib . . . ra* in this context are not clear. It seems to relate to an action antecedent to the actual court proceedings. Accordingly, “the rolling of a seal” may refer to the sending of official notifications (perhaps sealed letter-orders) to the other party and witnesses, summoning them to appear before the court. A less likely alternative is that it refers to the sealing of court records, or that the meaning of *kišib . . . ra* here is idiomatic: “to give an authorization, to verify” or the like.

Legal documents of the Ur III period are commonly sealed. Without claiming completeness for our data, the following five categories of sealed legal texts can be distinguished.

## SALE DOCUMENTS

The examination of 123 Ur III sale documents, which I collected during my dissertation research,<sup>32</sup> shows that only 61 of these texts are sealed. However, this figure cannot be taken at face value because seal impressions, as mentioned above, are more likely to be found on the envelopes than on the tablets,

and the majority of these texts are preserved as inner tablets only. Furthermore, many of the sale documents are partially destroyed, so that the actual number of sealed ones conceivably could have been much higher.

The distribution of the ownership of impressed seals is as follows: a) thirty-five texts are sealed by the seller or sellers only; b) five texts most probably are sealed by the seller (the name of the seller is not preserved in the content of the document); c) four texts are sealed by both the seller and the guarantor; d) one text (UET 3 14) is sealed by both the seller and the official, the nu-banda of Adab, who attended this transaction; e) one text (PBS 8/2 157+NATN 3 [seals]) is sealed by the seller and the slave who was the object of this transaction; f) one text (UM 55-21-222) is sealed by the seller and his brother, who is not listed in the document; g) five texts are sealed only by the official who attended this transaction;<sup>33</sup> h) one text is sealed only by the guarantor;<sup>34</sup> i) one text is sealed by the person who was sold in the transaction;<sup>35</sup> j) one text is sealed by the buyer;<sup>36</sup> k) one text bears an impression of a seal belonging to Ninurta;<sup>37</sup> l) five texts bear seal impressions which are illegible.

As we can see, it is the seller who is expected to seal the sale document. The seals of sellers appear on at least 42 tablets (47 with uncertain cases) out of a total of 61 sealed texts. In ten cases, the seal of the guarantor of the official accompanies or even replaces the seal of the seller. Among the irregularities encountered, the case of a slave who impressed his seal next to the seal of his seller is of special interest.

#### LOAN DOCUMENTS (C-1)

The study of a sample of 121 Ur III loan documents<sup>38</sup> reveals that out of this number 62 texts are sealed. Again, as in the case of sale documents, we must caution that this figure may not be quite representative as the majority of these texts are preserved without their envelopes.

Among the sealed loans 55 texts are sealed by the borrower or borrowers, and the remaining seven texts by persons other than the borrowers (in one case, no. 146, the son of the borrower).

#### GIFT DOCUMENTS

Only two sealed gift documents are known to me (UET 3 24; TuM N F 1/2 258). Both of them are sealed by the donors.

#### HIRE DOCUMENTS

Seal impressions are found on three of the extant hire documents. One of them (Čiğ-Kizilyay NRVN 226), involving the hiring of a slave woman, is sealed by her owner. The other two texts (TuM N F 1/2 24; NATN 94) deal with the hiring of free persons. The first is sealed by the brother of the hired individual, and the second by a person who is not mentioned in the tablet.

#### COURT RECORDS

As a general rule the Ur III court records were not sealed.<sup>39</sup> The only exception is the document from Ur (UET 3 45) bearing the seal impressions of two officials (šabra and sukal-mah) who acted as judges in this proceeding.

To summarize, the legal texts are sealed by the party who undertakes a specific obligation in a given transaction: in sales, the seller who abandons any claim to the sold property; in loans, the borrower who promises to return the loan (and interest) on a given date; in gifts, the donor who renounces his rights



to the gift; in hiring, the owner or relative of the hired person who assures that the hireling will work in accordance with the agreement. The seals of officials rolled on six sale documents and one court record have a different function, that of authorization or attestation.

### Discrepancies between the Inscriptions on Seal Impressions and the Content of Tablets

As any student of Ur III economic and legal texts knows, in numerous instances the impression of an official's seal can be found on a tablet written after the death or retirement of a king or dignitary to whom the seal was "dedicated." Another common irregularity is that the occupation or title of the seal's owner appearing in a seal inscription is different from that in the content of the tablet. We have to assume that the information contained in a seal inscription was accurate and up-to-date when the seal was fashioned. However, later some changes might have taken place in the facts recorded on a seal, thus outdating the seal inscription. The continued use of outdated seals was the source of the above discrepancies. The question then arises, what was the normal procedure when the information in a seal inscription became outdated? As a general rule, a new seal with a new legend was prepared or else the old inscription (or just part of it) was erased from the old seal and replaced by the new inscription. This could happen when a) the person whom the seal invoked died or retired, or b) the owner of the seal was promoted to a higher office.

Among the numerous examples of two or even more<sup>40</sup> seals belonging to the same person and invoking two different rulers or dignitaries we can name the seals of Ur-Lisi, the ensi of Umma (from Shulgi year 33 to Amar-Sin 9.<sup>41</sup> The first of his seals (MVN 1 74) is dedicated to Shulgi, and the second (MVN 1 75) to Amar-Sin. His successor, Ajakalla (Amar-Sin 8 to Shu-Sin 6, or later),<sup>42</sup> also used at least two seals, dedicated to Amar-Sin (MVN 1 3) and Shu-Sin (MVN 1 2), respectively. In both cases the old seals were replaced by completely new ones.

Aradani, the judge of Ur, may be said to have had two seals, which are dedicated to Amar-Sin (UET 3 1784, 1803 = UE 10, pl. 27 nos. 428-29) and Shu-Sin (UET 3 1782-83 = UE 10, pl. 27 no. 430), respectively. However, examination of the impressions clearly shows that the same seal was rolled in both instances, the only difference being that in the second impression the sign ŠU replaces the sign AMAR in the name of the king. Since the seal inscription could have been updated in this case by means of a very simple operation (by replacing one sign), there was no need to make a new seal.

As an example of the situation where a person acquired a new seal after his promotion to a higher position we can give two seals of a certain Gudea of Lagash. Gudea's first seal (Reisner Telloh 44) was manufactured when he was a dub-sar, i.e., a graduate of a scribal school (see pp. 47-48). At this time his father occupied the position of "archivist" (GÁ-dub-ba). In the inscription of his second seal (RA 58 [1964], p. 103 no. 67), Gudea is called "the archivist of Lagash," the position which he evidently took after his father. In the same seal legend, Gudea's father appears as "the retired archivist" (GÁ-dub-ba-gu-la).

Another personality from Lagash, Abbakalla, is called dub-sar in the inscription of his earlier seal (ITT 2 3536), while his father has the title of "the temple administrator of (the place) Uru" (sanga Uru<sup>ki</sup>). The inscription of Abbakalla's later seal (ITT 2 4312), which invokes Lu-girizal, the ensi of Lagash, calls him this time "the temple administrator of Uru," the office which he inherited from his father.<sup>43</sup>

Ninhilia, the wife of the aforementioned Ajakalla, the ensi of Umma, also used at least two seals during her lifetime. In the inscription of her first seal (JCS 26, p. 99 no. 1), which clearly antedates the appointment of her husband to the ensiship of Umma, she appears simply as "the wife of Ajakalla, son of

Ur-Damu.” The change in Ajakalla’s status is reflected by his wife’s second seal (JCS 26, p. 100 no. 2), where Ninhilia is now called “the wife of Ajakalla, the ensi of Umma.”

As was shown above, there existed a definite requirement to prepare a new seal or to alter the inscription of the old seal if a seal inscription became outdated. However, this requirement does not seem to have been followed very rigorously. Very often the outdated seal was used for quite a while until a new seal was acquired. Even then, the old seal did not have to be automatically discarded, and both seals might be used interchangeably. Thus the first seal of Ur-Lisi, the ensi of Umma, which is dedicated to Shulgi, was rolled as late as the tenth month of Amar-Sin 3 (MVN 1 76), while the impression of his second seal, dedicated to Amar-Sin, appears on a document dated to the year Amar-Sin 2 (MVN 1 75). Similarly, the seal of Ur-Lisi’s successor, Ajakalla, which invoked Amar-Sin, was still in use in Shu-Sin 1, eighth month (MVN 1 62, 69), whereas his seal dedicated to Shu-Sin is attested already in Shu-Sin 1, sixth month (MVN 1 2).

The impressions of the outdated seals may cause, in certain conditions, the misinterpretation of a tablet’s date. For example, the seal of a certain Giraddu from Ur, which is dedicated to Shulgi, is impressed on a document dated to Shu-Sin 1 (UET 3 24). If the date formula were not preserved on this tablet, the seal impression would be a very strong argument for attributing the text to Shulgi’s reign. A different kind of misunderstanding which such a seal may cause is illustrated by the seal of Lu-Utu, dedicated to Shu-Sin. Its impression, naming Lu-Utu “the son of Ur-Ashgi, the ensi of Adab,”<sup>44</sup> is preserved on a loan document dated to the year Shu-Sin 8 (BE 3/1 13). W. W. Hallo, who studied the sequence of the ensis of Adab in his M.A. dissertation, was familiar with this seal impression, which at that time was one of the few known references to Ur-Ashgi. Since the tenure of another ensi of Adab, Habaluke, was then believed to be Shulgi 48 to Shu-Sin 3 (now Shulgi 36 [UET 3 9] to Shu-Sin 5 [MVN 3 268]), Hallo’s obvious conclusion was that Ur-Ashgi held the office of the ensi of Adab after Habaluke.<sup>45</sup> In fact, as new evidence clearly shows, Ur-Ashgi is to be placed before Habaluke.<sup>46</sup> The seal of another son of Ur-Ashgi, Us-shaga, is rolled on an unpublished Adab text,<sup>47</sup> dated to Shulgi 44. In addition, a seal of Ur-PAP.MU.RA, the dub-sar, which invokes Ur-Ashgi, is impressed on Adab documents from Shulgi 40 (MVN 3 166, 174), 41 (MVN 3 327), and 42 (MVN 3 188).<sup>48</sup>

In the case of the seal of Us-shaga, it is almost certain that it was made during the tenure of Ur-Ashgi, and Us-shaga simply used it many years after the death or retirement of his father. This event had to occur before Shulgi 36, the earliest date for Habaluke (see above). A different phenomenon is involved concerning the seal of Lu-Utu. Lu-Utu acquired his seal during the reign of Shu-Sin (if the seal was not originally dedicated to Shulgi, and thus it could have been contemporary with Ur-Ashgi; for the change of the name of a king in a seal inscription, see above), and his father’s title “the ensi of Adab” simply signifies that Ur-Ashgi occupied this office at one time.

As mentioned earlier, one very often finds a situation where a person is promoted to a higher position, which is reflected by the content of the tablet, but he still uses his old seal giving his former position. For example, Utu-mu of Lagash is called in the legend of his seal “the nu-banda [(of x)],” but in the content of the tablet he appears as šabra, “the chief steward (of a household)” (MVN 2 61). Similarly, a certain Lugal-uruda is called “the surveyor of Nindara” (sag-du<sub>5</sub> <sup>d</sup>Nin-dar-a) in the inscription of his seal, while according to the tablet his position is sanga <sup>d</sup>Nin-dar-a, “the high priest of Nindara” (MVN 2 137).

A seemingly identical phenomenon is involved in the very common cases where a person is described as dub-sar in the inscription of his seal, whereas in the content of the tablet he has a different occupation. For example, Ur-Shara of Umma used two different seals calling him dub-sar but in the tablets he is consistently referred to as “archivist.” He used yet a third seal describing him as “archivist.”<sup>49</sup>

The explanation of this discrepancy is, however, quite different. The term dub-sar, apart from its basic meaning “scribe,” is an honorific title which merely indicates the graduation of the individual in ques-

tion from a scribal school.<sup>50</sup> Accordingly, there is no contradiction between the epithets used by Ur-Shara—dub-sar is his title, and GÁ-dub-ba his occupation—and thus he could use his dub-sar seal at any time during his administrative career.

It is tempting to speculate that the “dub-sar seal” was a kind of “diploma,” which may have been presented to a graduate of a scribal school at the conclusion of his studies. The possession of such a seal would have constituted proof that its owner was eligible and entitled to be employed in the state or temple administrative apparatus or to sell his services to private individuals.

### The Ownership of Seals in the Ur III Period

The available evidence gives us a strong indication that there were no class or legal restrictions regulating the ownership of seals in the Ur III period. The only restriction was probably an economic one—not everyone could afford to acquire a seal. The study of the status of the owners of seals offers a cross-section of Ur III society. The abundance of readily available evidence makes it unnecessary to present examples for seals belonging to the members of privileged classes, or even individuals located at the lower levels of the social ladder, such as craftsmen, shepherds, cooks, etc. The ownership of seals was not even denied to those who remained at the very bottom of the society, namely slaves.<sup>51</sup> We have already mentioned one example of a seal belonging to a slave. Another impression of a slave seal is on an unpublished loan document. The inscription of this seal reads: “Andul(luna), the slave of Bazi, the brewer.” The tablet itself is also of considerable interest: “X gur of barley (measured) by the royal gur, a barley loan, in place of Lu-Bau, the brewer, received and sealed by Andulluna. The month of Shegurkud. (The year formula).”<sup>52</sup> To my knowledge this is a unique case of a slave receiving a loan on behalf of a free person. There are two other examples of possible slave seals.<sup>53</sup> We should also mention here the impression of a seal belonging to a person described as a-ru-a-lugal, “a person donated ex-voto by the king” (ITT 5 9896—transliteration only). We do not know much about the social status of the a-ru-a people but it was definitely very low.<sup>54</sup>

### Legal Significance of the Ur III Seal

The use of a seal on the Ur III tablets created specific legal obligations. Thus the person who sealed a receipt was responsible for the received goods; the borrower who sealed the loan document was bound to return the loan to the creditor; the seller who put his seal on the sale document was obliged not to raise claims to the sold property and to give substitution if his title to the sold property proved invalid. In case the obligation was not fulfilled, the sealed document could be used as additional evidence, the testimony of witnesses being of primary importance in court action against the guilty party. It was therefore quite obvious that the loss of a seal might have had some dangerous consequences to its owner. An impostor could use a lost or stolen seal in a transaction, and, consequently, the owner of a seal could be liable for the fulfillment of obligations which were undertaken in his name.

A special procedure concerning the loss of a seal is described in a text which may be related to the genre of the so-called “literary legal decisions,”<sup>55</sup> included in Collection B of Sumerian Letters.<sup>56</sup> There are reasons to believe that this text deals with an actual event which took place in Ur III Nippur. Lugal-melam, the ensi (and) sanga, who appears as a witness there, is most probably the same person as Lugal-melam, the ensi of Nippur, whose tenure is documented from Amar-Sin 1 to 9.<sup>57</sup> Other individuals mentioned in this

text cannot be identified with any persons known to us from contemporary records, but their names are common in the Ur III economic and legal texts from Nippur. According to this document, the inscribed seal of Ur-DUN,<sup>58</sup> the merchant, was lost. By order of the assembly, the herald blew the horn in the streets, announcing that no one might have any claim against Ur-DUN.

It is difficult to ascertain whether every loss of a seal required the official cancellation of the seal's validity. The fact that the above text was included in the corpus of literary texts seems to indicate that it was the uniqueness of its content that qualified its selection for literary purposes. The reason the extraordinary measures had to be taken in the case of Ur-DUN's seal may have been the fact that Ur-DUN, on account of his occupation, was particularly vulnerable to the danger of having his lost seal used by an impostor.

In the summer of 1974, when I was working in the Babylonian Collection of Yale University, Professor W. W. Hallo showed me a copy of an Ur III text which deals with the loss of a seal. Even though it does not mention the official cancellation of the seal's validity, as described in the above text, it testifies to the importance of the seal as a legal vehicle and the concern in case of its loss. Professor Hallo has kindly agreed to publish this text as a separate contribution in this volume.

#### NOTES

\* My thanks are due to Professors I. J. Gelb and D. I. Owen for permission to cite unpublished texts. I would like to express my special gratitude to Professor Gelb for his help and advice in the preparation of this study.

Abbreviations are those of CAD with the following additions:

Forde	N. W. Forde, <i>Nebraska Cuneiform Texts of the Sumerian Ur III Dynasty</i> (Lawrence, Kansas, 1967)
Heinrich Fara	E. Heinrich, <i>Fara, Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft in Fara und Abu Hatab 1902/03</i> (Berlin, 1931).
MVN	<i>Materiali per il Vocabolario Neosumerico</i> (Rome, 1974-)
NATN	D. I. Owen, <i>Neo-Sumerian Archival Texts primarily from Nippur in the University Museum</i> (Paris, in press)
Pettinato UNL	G. Pettinato, <i>Untersuchungen zur neosumerischen Landwirtschaft</i> (Naples, 1967)
SACT	<i>Sumerian and Akkadian Cuneiform Texts in the Collection of the World Heritage Museum of the University of Illinois</i> (Urbana, Illinois, 1972-)
von der Osten Brett	H. H. von der Osten, <i>Ancient Oriental Seals in the Collection of Mrs. Agnes Baldwin Brett</i> (Chicago, 1936)
TCS	<i>Texts from Cuneiform Sources</i> (Locust Valley, New York, 1966-)
Westenholz ECTJ	A. Westenholz, <i>Early Cuneiform Texts in Jena</i> (Copenhagen, 1975)

1. "Stellvertretende Siegelung der Vertragsurkunden in der Ur III-Zeit," *Or. n.s.* 16 (1947), pp. 417-21; "Die Siegellegenden der Geschäftsurkunden der Stadt Ur in Chaldäa, Siegelrecht und Siegelpraxis in Südmesopotamien im 20. Jahrhundert v. Chr.," *Mededelingen van de Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie voor Wetenschappen, Letteren en Schone Kunsten, Klasse der Letteren* 12/6 (1950).

2. Falkenstein, *Gerichtsurkunden* 1, p. 8; Sollberger, *TCS* 1, p. 5; Kang, *SACT* 1, p. 243; Hallo, *HUCA* 29 (1958), pp. 83-84; Leemans, *JESHO* 7 (1964), p. 214.
3. E.g., Falkenstein *ATU* 565-73; *UVB* 4, pl. 14 c-h, etc. (*Uruk IV*); *OECT* 7 7, 9, 18, 25, etc. (*Uruk III*).
4. For the discussion of these formulas, see Hallo, *HUCA* 29, pp. 80, 84, and Kang, *SACT* 1, pp. 241-43. For a list of abbreviations and terms often used in translations of cuneiform, see Gelb's contribution in this volume, p. 108.
5. Or. n.s. 16 (1947), p. 417. Tablet: ki PN-ta PN-2 šu ba-ti/ ì-dab<sub>5</sub>; envelope: ki PN-ta kišib PN-2-a(k).
6. Cf. Hallo, *HUCA* 29, p. 84.
7. For this formula, see A. Goetze, *JCS* 17 (1963), pp. 36-37, and Kang, *SACT* 1, pp. 243-45.
8. For references to the different interpretations of *gìr*, see Falkenstein, *Gerichtsurkunden* 1, p. 46, n. 1, and G. Pettinato, *UNL* 1, p. 32 n. 15.
9. J. B. Nies, *Nies UDT*, p. 137, has proposed the translation "conveyancer, perhaps muleteer." This interpretation was followed in Jones-Snyder, p. 278 note 76, which advances the translation "conveyor," and it was further discussed by G. Buccellati, *The Amorites of the Ur III Period* (Naples, 1966), p. 278.
10. Cf. Buccellati, *Amorites*, p. 22.
11. M. T. Larsen, *Old Assyrian Caravan Procedures* (Istanbul, 1967), p. 95.
12. E.g., Falkenstein, *Gerichtsurkunden* 1, p. 46, where the term *gìr* is translated "Zuständigkeit des . . ." or "verantwortlich ist (oder zeichnet) . . ."; Pettinato, *AnOr* 45, p. 46, interprets the phrase *gìr PN* as "für die Richtigkeit: PN"; and, most recently, Kang, *SACT* 1, p. 257, argues that "the duty of the *gìr* officials seems to have been that of verifying the numbers of animals which were being received and disbursed and to certify whether or not the transaction was carried out accurately, in accordance with the given orders." Note also that the phrase *šēp x* was translated by Leemans, *SLB* 1/3, p. 107, as "x vouches for correctness."
13. The *zi-ga* formula is restricted to Shulgi's reign, being later replaced by the *ba-zi* phrase; see Goetze, *JCS* 17, p. 36, and Kang, *SACT* 1, p. 243.
14. *JCS* 1 (1947), p. 116.
15. In contrast to the *šu ba-ti* texts from other places, which are most often sealed.
16. *SACT* 1, p. 243.
17. *Ibid.*
18. E.g., *SACT* 2 1-34, 36-54, etc.
19. E.g., *SACT* 2 120-21, 127-33, etc.
20. E.g., *SACT* 2 71, 87-88.
21. See Schneider, *Or. n.s. 16* (1947), pp. 418-19 and n. 1.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 418: mu PN-šè kišib PN-2-a(k) (ìb-ra).
23. *MVN* 2 58 envelope: mu PN ugula-šè nu-banda PN-2 kišib PN-3 ìb-ra.
24. Schneider, *Or. n.s. 16*, pp. 420-21.
25. E.g., *UVB* 4, pl. 14 a-b, pl. 15 a-f, etc. (*Uruk*); *UE* 3 passim; *UET* 2 311-37 (*Ur*); Heinrich Fara, pls. 42-72 (*Fara*); *DP* 11-24, etc. (*Pre-Sargonic*); *RTC* 161-79; *ITT* 1 1094; *HSS* 10 3, etc. (*Sargonic*).
26. A. T. Clay, *BRM* 3, pp. 10-11.
27. For the examples, see *BRM* 3 passim.
28. *BIN* 8 47; *RA* 60 (1966), p. 71; *UVB* 7, pl. 23 W. 15966c.

29. TCS 1, p. 5.
30. According to D. O. Edzard, *Sumerische Rechtsurkunden des III. Jahrtausends* (Munich, 1968), p. 154, the seal impression is uninscribed, but the copy clearly shows the sign  $\dot{\text{I}}\text{L}$ , most probably the name of the seal's owner; cf. Falkenstein, *AfO* 14 (1941/44), p. 334; Westenholz *ECTJ*, p. 36. This individual is not mentioned in the tablet; note, however, that the text is not preserved completely.
31. For this title, see most recently P. Charvat, *ArOr* 42 (1974), pp. 163-64.
32. "Sale Documents of the Ur III Period" (in preparation).
33. di-kud-lugal, "the royal judge," in BE 3/1 14; egir, "the 'retainer' (of the ensi)," in UET 3 19; di-kud, "the judge," in UET 3 41; ha-za-núm, "the mayor," in TIM 5 12; the ensi of Nippur in TuM N F 1/2 53 (the seal is reconstructed after AOAT 22, p. 132).
34.  $\dot{\text{C}}\dot{\text{i}}\dot{\text{g}}\text{-Kizilyay}$  NRVN 217. The tablet is partially destroyed, so it may be that the seal of the seller was originally impressed on it.
35. NATN 679. The names of the contracting parties and the verb are not preserved; therefore it cannot be decided whether we are dealing here with a case of self-sale or whether this person was sold by someone else.
36. UET 3 39. This is a self-sale in which the buyer undertakes a specific obligation to provide for a woman who sells herself into slavery. Thus it is not surprising that it is the buyer who seals the tablet.
37. Eames Coll. Noor II. This text is not written on a regular tablet, but on the clay nail-sikkatu (Sum. kak). For the function of sikkatus in the sale transactions, see most recently R. S. Ellis, *Foundation Deposits in Ancient Mesopotamia* (New Haven, 1968), pp. 86-89. The inscription of the seal reads:  $^{\text{d}}\text{Nin-urta}$ , ensi-gal,  $^{\text{d}}\text{En-líl}$ , "Ninurta, the great ensi of Enlil" (collated). Ninurta's title ensi-gal  $^{\text{d}}\text{En-líl-lá}$  is also attested in the formula of Shulgi's 20th year (according to Ungnad's system, *RLA* 2, p. 141) and in the Sumerian literary texts (cf. Falkenstein, *SGL*, p. 113, and Sjöberg-Bergmann, *TCS* 3, p. 66). The function of this seal in our text is not clear. It may be that the seller belonged to the temple household of Ninurta, or else the seal might have been used as a sign of official authorization of sale. Another seal of Ninurta is impressed on the unpublished Pre-Sargonic administrative text IM 43749 (courtesy of I. J. Gelb). The inscription on the seal calls Ninurta "the ensi of Nippur":  $^{\text{d}}\text{Nin-urta}$ , ensi Nibru<sup>ki</sup>. For the seal's iconographic representation, see fig. 1 (the drawing was made for Professor Gelb by Mrs. M. Matoušová). The tablet itself is a short memo concerning sheep: 1) 90 u<sub>8</sub> 2) 90 udu-nita 3) MU-i-lí 4) É-GAM.GAM<sup>ki</sup>, "90 ewes, 90 rams, (the property of?) MU-ilí, (in) É-GAM.GAM."
38.  $\dot{\text{C}}\dot{\text{i}}\dot{\text{g}}\text{-Kizilyay}$  NRVN 73-193.
39. Falkenstein, *Gerichtsurkunden* 1, p. 8.
40. See, e.g., three different seals of Arad-Nanna, the sukal-mah: RTC 429; 430; ITT 2 937.
41. See P. Parr, *JCS* 26 (1974), p. 90.
42. *Ibid.*
43. The office of the temple administrator of Uru was hereditary in the family of Abbakalla, see M. Lambert, *RA* 55 (1961), pp. 77-78.
44. For the reading  $^{\text{a}\dot{\text{s}}}\text{as}_x(\dot{\text{S}}\text{IR})\text{-gi/gi}_4$ , see R. D. Biggs, *JCS* 24 (1971), pp. 1-2. This reading is now confirmed by the spelling PÙ.ŠA-Aš-gi<sub>4</sub> in MVN 2 233:8 (courtesy of I. J. Gelb). The same name is alternatively written PÙ.ŠA-Aš<sub>x</sub>(ŠIR)-gi<sub>4</sub> (BIN 3 589:6) and PÙ.SĀ-Aš<sub>x</sub>(ŠIR)-gi<sub>4</sub>- 'na' (BIN 3 579:6). The last example seems to suggest that the divine name was, in fact, Ashgi(n). Note also PN Ur- $^{\text{d}}\text{Aš}_x(\dot{\text{S}}\text{IR})\text{-gi}_4$ , which occurs in a Sargonic text from Nippur (TuM 5 9 iv 5 = Westenholz *ECTJ*, pl. 7).
45. W. W. Hallo, "The Ensi's of the Ur III Dynasty" (microfilm, University of Chicago, 1953), pp. 5-7.

46. For the early years of Habaluke, note also that a seal of Amar-šuba, the dub-sar, which invokes Habaluke, is impressed on the Adab documents dated to Shulgi 39, 40, and 41 (MVN 3 250; 165; 172, 183).
47. A 903 in the Oriental Institute Museum. The inscription reads:  
 i) Ur-<sup>d</sup> aš<sub>x</sub> (ŠIR)-gi<sub>4</sub>, ensi Adab<sup>ki</sup> Ur-Ashgi, ensi of Adab  
 ii) Ús-šag<sub>5</sub>-ga, dub-sar, dumu-ni Us-shaga, the scribe, (is) his son.
48. The name Ur-Ashgi occurs also in a votive inscription from Adab, which was almost certainly dedicated for the life of Shulgi. A fragment of this inscription (A 202) was published by Luckenbill as OIP 14 36. It can now be ascertained that this fragment belongs to a chlorite schist vessel (A 199 = AJSL 22 [1905-06] 39 no. 24), which preserves the first line of the inscription. The inscription can be reconstructed as follows: 1) [<sup>d</sup>Nin-h]ur-sag 2) [nam-ti] 3) [Šul-gi] 4) [nita kalag-ga] 5) lu[gal Uri<sub>2</sub><sup>ki</sup>-ma] 6) lugal ki-en-gi ki-[uri-ka-šè] 7) Ur-<sup>d</sup> aš<sub>x</sub> (ŠIR)-g[i] 8) [ensi Adab<sup>ki</sup>] 9) [a-mu-na-ru]. The reconstruction of the royal name as that of Shulgi is assured by the fact that the title lugal ki-en-gi ki-uri is used only by the first two rulers of the Ur III dynasty; after the 28th year of Shulgi it is replaced by the title lugal an-ub-da 4-ba; see Hallo Royal Titles, p. 83. Furthermore, it is known that Shulgi built for Ninhursang a dam in Adab, which deed is commemorated in a brick inscription (OIP 14 37; 38; 39). The fact that both texts invoke Ninhursang and employ the same royal title (lugal ki-en-gi ki-uri) suggests that the donation of the vessel by Ur-Ashgi took place at the same time as the building of the dam. Note that in another votive inscription for the life of Shulgi, this time dedicated by Habaluke, Shulgi has his latter title, i.e., lugal an-ub-da 4-ba (VAS 1 25).
49. a) Ur-<sup>d</sup>Šará dub-sar dumu Lugal-nanga (from Shulgi 36 [Jacobsen, Copenhagen 26] to Amar-Sin 3 [BIN 5 223]).  
 b) Ur-<sup>d</sup>Šará dub-sar dumu Lugal-nanga nu-banda-gud <sup>d</sup>Šará (from Shulgi 35 [Contenau Umma 70] to Amar-Sin 9 [SACT 2 112]).  
 c) Ur-<sup>d</sup>Šará GÁ-dub-ba dumu Lugal-nanga (dedicated to Ur-Lisi, the ensi of Umma; no date [Contenau Umma 69, 75; Or. 47-49, 497]).
50. See Hallo, JNES 31 (1972), p. 88, n. 7.
51. Seals were also owned by slaves in the Neo-Babylonian Period; for the most recent discussion of this problem, see M. A. Dandamayev, *Rabstvo v Babilonii* (Moscow, 1974), pp. 235-36.
52. BM 17822. Seal: An-dùl, arád ba-zi, lú-bappir. Tablet:  
 1 x (gur) še gur-lugal  
 2 še HAR-ra mu Lú-<sup>d</sup>Ba-ú lú-bappir-šè  
 3 kišib An-dùl-lú-na  
 4 iti še-gur<sub>10</sub> -kud  
 5 mu AN lugal ba-ku<sub>4</sub>
- The year formula, which cannot be located in the sequence of known Ur III year names, is most likely the same as the one appearing in UET 3 291: mu AN lugal ba-ga é-a ku<sub>4</sub>-ra.
53. Porada, *Corpus* 268: Lugal-dingir-mu arád Lú-dùg-ga; von der Osten Brett 45: Gîr-ni arád Lú-dingir-ra. One should keep in mind that arád can also mean "servant" in the seal inscriptions on so-called "arád-zu seals" and the inscriptions of the type PN (dumu PN-2) arád RN/DN. However, since there is no reason to assume that Lu-duga and Lu-dingira were individuals of any special importance, the interpretation of these two seals as slave seals is quite probable.
54. See I. J. Gelb, RA 66 (1972), pp. 5-7.
55. Cf. Hallo, *Studies* Oppenheim, p. 105, and S. Greengus, HUCA 40-41 (1969-70), p. 43.
56. F. A. Ali *Sumerian Letters*, pp. 113-16 = idem, *Sumer* 20 (1964), pp. 66-68.
57. Falkenstein, *Gerichtsurkunden* 1, p. 32 n. 3. For the dates of Lugal-melam, see Hallo, JNES 31 (1972), p. 94 n. 62.

58. kišib-mu-sar, literally “seal inscribed with a name (of the owner).” Cf. na<sub>4</sub>-kišib-mu-sar-ra-ne-ne = NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB ši-tir MU-šu-nu (Ai. VI iv 30); mu-sar-ra = ku-nu-uk šu-mi (Izi G 54).



## Seals Lost and Found

by  
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### I

In 1951, the late Ferris J. Stephens catalogued twenty-two cuneiform tablets which the Texas Memorial Museum, University of Texas at Austin, had acquired from Edgar J. Banks, and copied two of them. One of these copies, found among his papers, is presented here with the kind permission of William W. Newcomb, Jr., Director, Texas Memorial Museum, and Denise Schmandt-Besserat, Professor of Ancient Near Eastern Art.<sup>1</sup> A transliteration and translation follows:

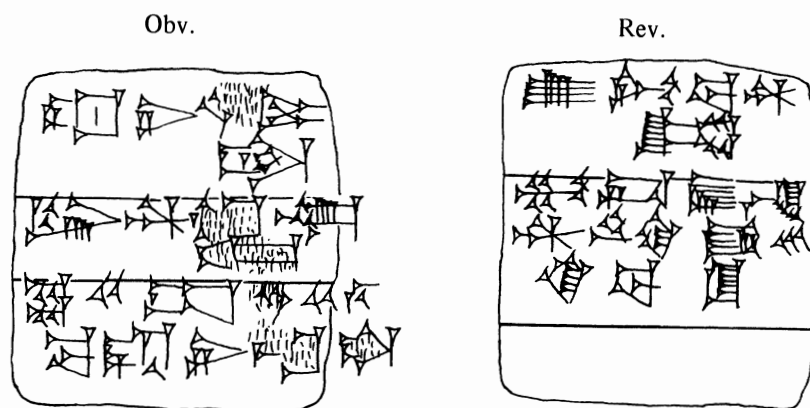


Figure 1. Tablet from the collection of the Texas Memorial Museum, Austin. Copy by Ferris J. Stephens.

kišib na<sub>4</sub>- TUR-lâl  
Lú-<sup>d</sup>Nin-šubur(a)-ka  
iti min-èš u<sub>4</sub>-19 ba-ra-zal-la-ta

ú-gu ba-an-dé  
mu-ús-sa en-<sup>d</sup>Nanna-Ga-eš<sup>ki</sup> ba-hun

“The seal of elallu-stone belonging to Lu-Ninshubur was lost after the 19th day of the month of the ‘twin sanctuaries’ had passed. Year following (the year when) the high priestess of Nanna of Ga’esh was installed.”

This announcement of the loss of a seal is a model of conciseness. The description of the seal confines itself to the nature of the stone from which it was cut, if the third sign in line 1 may be emended to i (or e) thus furnishing yet another spelling for the elallu-stone. There are already attested the writings e-làl, e-li-li, e-la-li, a-làl, e-le-el, e-lá-lu, e-lal-lum and á-lal-lum.<sup>2</sup> The underlying phonetics suggest an analogy to the equally varied orthographies of alal = allû, the water-pipe.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps, indeed, popular etymology connected the two words, seeing the typical perforated cylinder seal as a kind of a pipe. That elallu-stone was used for cylinder seals seems clear from the Old Babylonian forerunner to Hh. XVI where (as with many other kinds of stone) we find the entry na<sub>4</sub>-kišib-e-làl-la, “a stone seal of elallu-(stone).”<sup>4</sup>

The name of the seal-owner is given without either patronymic or profession, thus implying a person of considerable prominence. Since it is a common name, the present state of neo-Sumerian prosopography does not permit us to identify it more closely even if we confine our search to Umma in the mid-Ur III period.

The predicate is a finite form of the verb ú-gu . . . -dé. For the Akkadian equivalent halāqu in analogous contexts see below (III).

The scribe lavished most of his attention on the date, specifying year, month, day and even time of day when the loss occurred or was reported. The year is the ninth and last of Amar-Sin, the month is the seventh in the Umma calendar, and the day is the 19th, expressed in a form sometimes taken to refer to the evening. The precise dating implies that any document found to be sealed with the missing seal after this time would be invalid or, indeed, invalidated. The latter is specifically provided for in numerous Ur III texts and model contracts from Nippur, with clauses like kišib-ba-ne-ne ú-gu ba-dé al-pà zi-re-dam, kišib PN ki PN-2 i-gál-la ú-gu ba-an-dè a-ba-pà zi-re-dam, and kišib-ba ul-pà zi-ir-re-dam,<sup>5</sup> i.e., approximately, “should any of their sealed tablets be lost and then found again, they are to be destroyed.”

## II

As Steinkeller has pointed out above,<sup>6</sup> the loss of a seal was sufficiently grave to find its way into the literary corpus. Ali reconstructed a text on the subject from five exemplars and incorporated it into his edition of “Letter Collection B” as item 12.<sup>7</sup> He based himself in the first instance on the text UM 29.16.139+ where items B 1 - B 20 appear in sequence. The text also appears together with the “Royal Correspondence of Isin” in PBS 5 65. Elsewhere it is grouped with the miscellaneous letters (CBS 13968), with non-epistolary material (SLTN 131)<sup>8</sup> or, apparently, by itself (UM 29.15.384).<sup>9</sup> Further evidence may now be added on this point. In YBC 12074 (unpubl.), the text occurs by itself on a tablet whose reverse is left blank. And on NBC 7800 (unpubl.; edition in preparation), it occurs as the concluding item in an eight-column collection of model contracts. There it would seem to be most logically at home.

The text may have found its way into some of the exemplars of “Letter Collection B” secondarily, most likely because of the appearance in it of “Lugal-melam the ensi (and) sanga.” Ali was troubled by this “combination of secular and clerical authority” but a parallel is closer to hand than the one he offered.<sup>10</sup> For letters B 10 and B 11 are respectively to and from an unnamed “ensi (and) sanga.” And while Ali takes these as separate persons there, the grammar of the letters is sufficiently confused to admit interpreting them as referring to one and the same person. If so, they may in fact allude to Lugal-melam and account for the tendency to attach our text directly to them in some exemplars.

The principal variants of the unpublished duplicates may be briefly noted here. NBC 7800 inserts, between Ali's lines 6 and 7, the following: KA.KA-ne-ne(?) / ba-an-me-eš kišib-ba-ne-ne in-x / -eš. Lines 8 and 9 are reversed, and lines 10-11 omitted. YBC 12074 has in place of Ali's line 5: Lú-gi-na GÌR.NITA. It omits line 8, and in place of line 11 has U<sub>4</sub>-ul-a ha-za-nu-um. Both texts appear to read Ad-lul(?) in line 9.

Steinkeller observes correctly that, apart from Lugal-melam, “other individuals mentioned in this text cannot be identified with any personalities known to us from the contemporary [i.e., Ur III] records.” Some of them can, however, be identified with personalities known to us from other literary documents of Old Babylonian date which concern Nippur in the Ur III period, including the owner of the lost seal himself, the merchant Ur-dun. He is the author of a literary letter to an unnamed king, probably Shulgi (YBC 5011, unpubl.).<sup>11</sup>

Lu-Suena (or Lu-gina) is not otherwise attested as šakkanakku,<sup>12</sup> but Lu-gina recurs in Letter B 19 (line 13). And Zu-zu, the head of the academy (um-mi-a), recurs as father of Lugal-murub (or Lugal-nisag), the author of Letters B 16 and B 18 (the latter actually a dedication),<sup>13</sup> and as grandfather of Enlil-massu, the addressee of Letter B 19. Moreover, Zu-zu may be no more than a suitable nickname for a learned man, meaning approximately “Mr. Know-it-all.”<sup>14</sup> In much the same vein, Sin-shamuh in his letter to Enki says of himself “I am a scribe, one who ‘knows my stuff’ (níg-mu zu-zu-a).”<sup>15</sup> Later Kassite seal inscriptions turned the expression into a divine epithet, “one who thoroughly knows my plight.”<sup>16</sup> And in Letter B 16 (line 9), three out of four duplicate texts have <sup>d</sup>En-líl-lá-al-ša<sub>6</sub> instead of Zu-zu.<sup>17</sup> This Enlil-alsha, in turn, recurs in B 19 as one of the two “former um-mi-a’s.” The other is given there as Na.<sup>d</sup>En-líl, surely a mistake for Na-bi-<sup>d</sup>En-líl. If so, we can even establish a connection with “The house of Ur-meme,”<sup>18</sup> for the scribe Nabi-Enlil turns out to be the son of Sag-Enlila (in the time of Ibbi-Sin) as now confirmed from “Letter-prayer M”<sup>19</sup> by the better-preserved duplicate newly published by van Dijk.<sup>20</sup>

As for Si-dù the scribe, we can hardly separate him from the traditional author of the “Series of Enlil-ibni (= Si-dù)” reputed to have lived in the time of Ishbi-Irra.<sup>21</sup> Combining all these data, we can readily describe the principals of our text as some of the leading citizens of Nippur in the second half of the 21st century.

### III

Concern over the loss of a seal continued into late Old Babylonian times, as shown in a text published by Klengel.<sup>22</sup> The text states that “since the first day of the eleventh month the black seal<sup>23</sup> of Šilli-Urash has disappeared.” There follow the names of four witnesses and the date, 1/XI/Ammi-ditana 23.<sup>24</sup> Klengel explains the “double-dating” of this otherwise terse document as reflecting the importance of the seal (and its owner), and the consequent need to publicize its loss without a day’s delay. Alternatively, one may suggest that the document simply dates the loss (and its implied legal consequences) from the day it was reported and/or publicized. A comparable case is now provided by YOS 13 192, a “birth certificate” from the same late Old Babylonian period. According to Finkelstein, “the document was executed on the very date of her birth.”<sup>25</sup> Or, we might say, it was dated (ante-dated?) to the date of birth, and meant to take legal effect from then on.

Klengel provides numerous parallels from contemporaneous Dilbat texts to the personal names found in his document. The texts newly published in YOS 13 provide additional attestations. Note especially nos. 371 and 405. In both, Šilli-Urash appears as the father of Shu-Amurru either as the purchaser (so also in no. 409) or the creditor. In 371, dated Ammi-šaduqa 17, Iddin-Urash the egir appears as witness, and in 405, dated Ammi-šaduqa 4, Eṭirum appears as witness and, although his patronymic is lost on the tablet, collation shows it is Gi-mil-<sup>d</sup>AMAR.[UD] on the seal impression. Marduk-muballiṭ the scribe appears on nos. 323 (with seal B; Ammi-ditana 24), 260 and 289 (both Ammi-ditana 34). Iddin-Lagamal son of Ili-iddinam appears as witness on nos. 408 (with seal B; Ammi-šaduqa 8) and 54 (Ammi-šaduqa 10). Thus we have ample additional evidence for the witnesses and perhaps the principal of Klengel’s text, presumably at Dilbat, in the three decades after it was inscribed.

## IV

If the legal consequences of losing one's seal were thus taken seriously by the Mesopotamians, its ominous significance was considered downright sinister. The most elaborate catalogue of "seal-omens" is found in the "Assyrian Dream-book," near the beginning of the unplaced chapter which Oppenheim designated "Tablet B."<sup>26</sup> The most nearly relevant entries here are lines 23 and 26: "If he wears a seal and one takes (it) away: either his son or his daughter will die . . . . If [he wears (?)] a seal with [his] n[ame] and one takes (it) away: his son will die." Oppenheim noted that the predictions of the entire seal-section "bear overwhelmingly on progeny," and accounted for the association in terms of the form and function of the seals as "identifying marks" and "'carriers' of the individuality of the person who wears and uses them" and, by extension, of sons who "extend the personal existence of the father beyond the natural limitations."<sup>27</sup> He was then generally unwilling to draw on psychological or psycho-analytical interpretations except in the most obvious instances.<sup>28</sup> Later he did venture onto this path,<sup>29</sup> and indeed it seems difficult to ignore the phallic symbolism evident in the cylinder-seal. The two omens cited here have, in fact, been seen as examples, rare in Mesopotamian divination outside of oneiromancy, where the associative principle between protasis and apodosis "makes some sense in modern terms."<sup>30</sup>

Dream omens were not, however, different from other cuneiform omens in another respect: they constituted an "early warning system" of the prognosis, not its cause or diagnosis. And since the prognosis was unfavorable more often than not, the omens were normally associated with rituals designed to ward off the evil they portended.<sup>31</sup> These are the so-called *nam-búr-bi* rituals, and among them is one precisely covering the loss (real or imagined?) of a cylinder-seal.<sup>32</sup> Its incipit recurs as catchline of the 135th tablet of the *nam-búr-bi* series in the Niniveh tradition,<sup>33</sup> so it must have constituted the next chapter in that tradition. The ritual includes references to named persons, notably "the princess In-ni-ba-ti, wife of Lit-tú-<sup>d</sup>Sin, and daughter-in-law (?) of Bur-x-<sup>d</sup>Ba-ú" but for now their identity remains elusive.<sup>34</sup> Suffice it to say that, in its more modest way, the loss of seals is a theme as persistent in the Mesopotamian texts as their presence is in the excavations.<sup>35</sup>

## NOTES

1. I am particularly indebted to Professor Schmandt-Besserat for her hospitality and for the opportunity to study the various collections of cuneiform tablets at the campus in Austin in February, 1975. The text in question was not, unfortunately, among them at that time, so that collation of Stephens' copy was not possible.
2. MSL 10 59 134-134b (with variants); 74:10; CAD E 74.
3. Hallo, *BiOr* 20 (1963), p. 137 s.v.
4. MSL 10 59:134a.
5. TuM N F 1/2 (1937) 47 and NRVN 1 (1965) 244 (refs. courtesy P. Michalowski). Third reference cited from unpublished model contracts to be edited elsewhere; cf. for now SLT 34 obv.; Ai.VI iv (MSL 1 88) 26-29; Hh. II (MSL 5 57f.) 92f. See in general A. L. Oppenheim, *Eames Coll.*, pp. 131-33.
6. I am grateful to Mr. Steinkeller for inviting me to submit this article, which, in a sense, is an appendix to his study.
7. F. A. Ali, *Sumerian Letters: Two Collections from the Old Babylonian Schools* (University Microfilms, 1964), pp. 113-16; improved edition: *idem*, "Blowing the horn for public announcement," *Sumer* 20 (1964), pp. 66-68.

8. See the reconstruction of this text by M. Civil, *Or. n.s.* 41 (1972), pp. 89f.
9. See C. Wilcke, *ZA* 60 (1969), charts facing p. 68.
10. *Sumerian Letters*, 116, n. 5; *Sumer* 20 (1964), p. 68, n. 5.
11. Edited by P. Michalowski in his dissertation, "The Royal Correspondence of Ur."
12. A. Goetze, "Šakkanakkus of the Ur III Empire," *JCS* 17 (1963), pp. 1-31.
13. Ali, *Sumerian Letters*, pp. 130-36, 144-48; idem, "Dedication of a Dog to Nintinugga," *Ar.Or.* 34 (1966), pp. 289-93.
14. Akkadian mudû (GAŠAM) for which see most recently H. Reviv, *IEJ* 22 (1972), p. 221 and n. 25. The name is in fact so translated in two Old Babylonian exemplars of "Silbenvokabular A," while the third "explains" it simply as um-mi-a! See E. Sollberger, *Studies Landsberger* (= *AS* 16, 1965) 23 and 25 ad line 41.
15. Hallo, *JAOS* 88 (= *AOS* 53/1, 1968), p. 83 line 25. Theoretically, a reading níg mu-zu-zu-a, "I am one who has thoroughly learned (his) stuff" is also possible; see Å. Sjöberg, *JCS* 25 (1973), pp. 135f. I take this opportunity to correct my reading of the rest of the line to: na-mà-ah-šè ba-ku<sub>4</sub>-re-en, "I have been turned into a dolt" (cf. Sjöberg, loc. cit.). C. Wilcke was kind enough to call my attention to the improved reading by letter of July 14, 1969, and indeed it had become clear to me upon the appearance of *AHw* fasc. 9 (1969) 799 where nuā'um is equated with na-gá-ah. But I prefer to read na-mà-ah and regard the word as a cognate or at least a "playful orthography" of the type discussed by me in *JANES* 5 (= *The Gaster Festschrift*, 1973), pp. 168f. Von Soden himself disposed of an alleged loanword \*nagāhu in *Ugarit-Forschungen* 4 (1972), p. 160. That leaves only an alleged [lú-na]-ga-ah = [nu-'a-ú] in K.10018 (unpubl.), cited *MSL* 10 (1970) 25 ad Hh. XVI 298, but I suspect a misprint for na-gá-ah. For other references see Sjöberg, loc. cit.
16. H. Limet, *Les Légendes des sceaux cassites* (1971) 433 n. 1 and 72f. nos. 4.15, 4.20 and 4.21.
17. Ali, *Sumerian Letters*, p. 132; add: *YBC* 7170 (unpubl.).
18. Hallo, *JNES* 31 (1972), pp. 87-95.
19. *BE* 31 29; republ. *ISCT* 1 126 Ni. 972; cf. Hallo, *JCS* 24 (1971), p. 39.
20. *VAS* 17 (1971) 44 ii 28 - iii 24. The name should accordingly be substituted for Inim-Inanna(?) in my chart, *JNES* 31 (1972), p. 89; cf. *ibid.*, p. 93 and n. 45.
21. Hallo, *JAOS* 83 (1963), pp. 174f. and nn. 62 and 67; *Or. n.s.* 42(1973), p. 232 n. 26.
22. H. Klengel, "Eine babylonische Verlustanzeige," *Or. n.s.* 37 (1968), pp. 216-19.
23. So Klengel; P. Michalowski, to whom I owe this reference, suggests instead "the seal with (the) name" as in *VAS* 16 155 (cf. P. Kraus, *MVAG* 36/1, pp. 28f.; *CAD* K 545) or "the inscribed seal," i.e., NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB < šītir > šu-mi, as in the comparable kišib mu-sar of the Sumerian text above (II). Cf. also *Ai. VI* iv 30 (= *MSL* 1, p. 88).
24. For the date formula's variant with urudu alan (Klengel, 218, n. 1) see most recently Levine and Hallo, *HUCA* 38 (1967), p. 52 s.v.
25. J. J. Finkelstein, *YOS* 13 (1972), p. 15.
26. A. L. Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East* (= *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 46/3, 1956), p. 322; translated *ibid.*, 276f.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 277.
28. *Ibid.*, pp. 185f.
29. Idem, "Mantic dreams in the Ancient Near East," in G. E. von Grunbaum and R. Caillois, eds., *The Dream and Human Societies* (1966), pp. 341-50.
30. Hallo and Simpson, *The Ancient Near East: a History* (1971), p. 161; previously Hallo, "Mesopotamia," *Encyclopedia Miqraith* 5 (1968), col. 119 (in Hebrew).

31. See most recently J. Bottéro in *École Pratique des Hautes Études IVe Section, Annuaire 173/4* (1974), pp. 87-123, esp. 92f.; R. I. Caplice, *The Akkadian Namburbi Texts: an Introduction* (= *Sources from the Ancient Near East 1/1*, 1974), pp. 7-9.
32. LKA 110, edited by E. Ebeling, *RA 49* (1955), pp. 138-41.
33. Ebeling, *RA 49* (1955), pp. 178-85. Latest translation of the text by Caplice, *Akkadian Namburbi Texts*, pp. 23f. (Text 14).
34. Unless we are prepared to interpret the second name as Amar-Suen or Bur-Sin.
35. The theme continues into more recent times. To the courtesy of Mevr. E. C. M. Leemans-Prins (Arnhem) I owe the reference to an announcement, comparable to the three discussed above, from medieval Holland; see her *Zegels en Wapens van Steden in Zuid-Holland* (1971?), p. 9. The city-seals which are the subject of her book also find an Old Babylonian parallel of sorts in UET 5 246, a law-suit where the *kunuk āli* came to the aid of the defendant; but this ambiguous phrase may have to be understood as "sealed document of the city" with F. R. Kraus, *WO 2* (1955), p. 133.

## Presentation Seals of the Ur III/Isin-Larsa Period

by

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The attempt to formulate relationships between the owners of cylinder seals and the scenes depicted on them has proved to be one of the most unrewarding aspects of the study of cylinder seals. If apparent correlations are found on one seal, they are often contradicted by other examples.

One large class of seals in which the scene appears to bear at least a general relationship to the information given in the inscription is the group called arad-zu seals, which first appear in the Early Dynastic period, become common in Akkadian times and continue into later periods. This seal type is used by many high officials and commonly contains in its inscription the name and titles of the seal owner along with a statement that he is the servant of whichever king is then ruling. From the Ur III period on, the scenes on these seals generally depict what has been called a "presentation scene," in which a man sits in the position usually filled by a deity, but wears a turban instead of a horned crown. He also usually holds a small cup and sits on a cushioned stool instead of the more elaborate throne of the gods. It has been assumed that this figure represents the king. On most of these seals a standing man faces the king, and the man is usually accompanied by one or more goddesses. The scene depicted is thought to represent the seal owner paying homage to the king.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to this large class of seals, there is another, much smaller group which will be examined in detail here. These are the so-called in-na-ba or "Presentation Seals," which specifically state in their inscriptions that they have been presented by a king to his servant. The inscription on these seals generally includes the ruler's name and titles, followed by the seal owner's name and titles, and ends with the statement, "to his servant, he has presented," (ir-da-ni-ir in-na-ba, or at Eshnunna, a-na x i-qi<sub>4</sub>-iš). These seals are not common; only twenty-two are known from a period of about 200 years, from late Ur III through the early Isin-Larsa period. The first fifteen, chronologically, were given by the kings of Ur, and these are followed by six presented by rulers of Eshnunna. To this later period also belongs a seal given by an ensi ("governor") or Susa.

Most of the data on the presentation seals have been outlined by Sollberger,<sup>2</sup> but I would like here to examine the seals as a group in more detail, and to consider some hitherto unpublished information on the Eshnunna seals and one important new seal impression from that city.<sup>3</sup>

The seals will be considered chronologically, taking into account the scene depicted on the seal (if it has been published), the status of the individual who received the seal, and the function which he performs.

The earliest possible example of a presentation seal is on a sealing with a partially destroyed inscription and no intact scene, which was apparently given by Shulgi to Šillush-Dagan, the governor of Simurrum. If this seal has been read correctly, it would be not only the earliest presentation seal, but one of only two to be given to an ensi.<sup>4</sup>

Of the fifteen seals known to have been given by kings of the Ur III Dynasty to individuals, Shu-Sin is represented by two seals. One, from his third year, was given to a cupbearer (*sagi*), Abi-abih.<sup>5</sup> The unpublished seal picture is said to show the king seated. The tablet containing the impression deals with the receipt by Abi-abih of beef offerings for a religious festival.

The other seal from Shu-Sin has been known for some years from rollings on two labels from Drehem, dated to his sixth year, which record the receipt of a number of slaughtered animals.<sup>6</sup> The seal belongs to Babati. A number of titles are partially preserved on the seal impression including comptroller (*šadubba*), accountant royal (*šatam lugal*), and governor general (*šagina*) of Mashkan Sharrum. Robert Whiting, however, has recently found a more completely preserved impression of this seal on a tablet from Eshnunna.<sup>7</sup> The tablet dates to Shu-Sin's third year, three years earlier than the other impressions. The scene (C-3a-b) is complete, although somewhat damaged by having been written over, and shows the bearded, seated king at the right wearing a plain robe and perhaps holding a cup. He faces a standing man who wears a long tunic. The seal inscription continues after the titles given above with the following: "ensi of Awal," then a break and the names of several goddesses, and continues, "the brother of Abi-Simti, his beloved mother," (that is, Shu-Sin's mother), "to his servant, he gave this seal." In addition to the important new genealogical information contained here, the content of the tablet itself is quite interesting: it records the receipt of flour by Tishatal, "the man of Nineveh," presumably the Hurrian ruler of Nineveh. The flour is given out from the royal stores by the ensi of Eshnunna to Tishatal and his escort of more than one hundred men, by the authority of Babati, who seals the transaction, presumably as the representative of Shu-Sin.

Thirteen seals in all are known to have been given to individuals by Ibbi-Sin. From his first year is a tablet from Tello (C-4a) which records gifts of grain, wool and oil to the children of a woman weaver, disbursed by the ensi of Girsu and sealed by Ir-Nanna, the chancellor (*sukkal-mah*).<sup>8</sup> The scene on the seal is almost identical to that of Babati's, with the exception that the king is beardless and wears a flounced robe, and the man facing him holds a baton or mace.

From the same year is a tablet (C-4b) concerning oil rations for troops, which is sealed by Lugal-azida, comptroller royal (*šatam lugal*) and priest of Enlil.<sup>9</sup> Here the seated king's robe is plain, and Sollberger suggests that the object which he holds could represent the seal itself, which he is presenting to the man standing before him. The object here depicted is squarer than the slightly conical cup which the king usually holds.

A tablet from Ibbi-Sin's second year records ten gur of grain which is a royal gift issued to a snake charmer by the ensi of Umma, the transaction being sealed by Ur-Nigin-gara, the comptroller (*šadubba*).<sup>10</sup> The scene on this seal is somewhat different, as can be seen from Nougayrol's drawing (C-5b) in which a standing man wearing a robe faces a standing king who holds a cup, wears a turban, and holds a sort of towel over his arm. Nougayrol suggests that the king is nude, but it is difficult to decide from the impression itself, which is somewhat obliterated (C-5a). Again, the man facing the king appears to be holding a baton.

Ur-Nigin-gara, the owner of the seal, presents something of a problem since two other seals were given by Ibbi-Sin to a man or men with this name, and it is difficult to decide how many individuals are involved. Impressions of a seal different from the one above, but presented by Ibbi-Sin to an Ur-Nigin-gara (again called a *šadubba*), are preserved on several sealings from Ur (C-6a-b).<sup>11</sup> The scene on the seal includes a goddess standing behind the man; and the king, wearing a plain robe and holding a cup, is bearded. Yet a third seal presented to an Ur-Nigin-gara is found on a tablet from Ibbi-Sin's ninth year.<sup>12</sup> The scene represented on this seal is not published, but the title is here given as scribe. The tablet itself concerns barley issued to the daughter-in-law of the ensi Ur-mes, and perhaps to the queen.



A tablet from Ibbi-Sin's third year records the receipt of cattle and has the impression of a presentation seal of a man whose name and title are not preserved.<sup>13</sup> The next known seal, chronologically, is that found on a tablet from Ibbi-Sin year 7 which records the receipt of offerings connected with the shrine of the moon god Nanna at Ur by the cupbearer (šagi), Sin-abu, whose seal is a gift of the king.<sup>14</sup> A similar tablet from the eighth year records the receipt of oil rations for the shrine of Amar-Sin by a cook (muhaldim), Uri-kidug, who had received his seal from Ibbi-Sin<sup>15</sup> and from Ibbi-Sin's 14th year there is a partially preserved legal text. The subject of the case is obscure, but the king officiated, and two of the three judges have presentation seals, Lu-Shu-Sin, who is both a courier (sukkal) and a šabra official, and Ninlil-amamu, the chancellor (sukkal-mah).<sup>16</sup>

A legal text from Ibbi-Sin's 19th year concerns the purchase of a slave by a cupbearer, in which Lu-Enlila, a man who acts as a judge in the case, has a seal from the king. The seal inscription gives him the title "seafaring merchant," (garaš abbaka).<sup>17</sup>

A sealing from Ur preserves the impression of a seal of Ur-šaga, a courier (sukkal) (C-6c). The standing king wears a short kilt, holds a cup, and faces a man whose head is indistinct but who holds a long stick. Between them is a sun disk and a small goddess, cut over the ground line.<sup>18</sup>

A sealing from Nippur bears the seal impression of Sag-Nanna-zu, a priest of Enlil whose seal was a gift from Ibbi-Sin.<sup>19</sup> The scene shows the seated king facing a standing man with clasped hands wearing a long robe. The figure of the king is perhaps the finest example of its type, incorporating as it does an especially graceful pose, and fine details such as a necklace and bracelet, and a small jar of distinctive shape. It captures an expression, almost a smile, on the king's face—an especially noteworthy achievement when one considers that the original figure is about two centimeters high (C-7a-b).

With the end of the Ur III Dynasty the tradition of presentation seals seems to have come to an end in Sumer and Akkad, as no later examples are known. The practice was continued, however, in the Isin-Larsa period at Eshnunna.

The earliest example from Eshnunna is a seal given by the ruler Nurahum, a contemporary of both Ibbi-Sin and Ishbi-Irra. The seal inscription reads: "Nurahum, beloved of Tishpak, ensi of Eshnunna, to Ushashum his son-in-law, son of Abda-El, rabiān Amurrim, presented (this seal)." Nurahum was placed on the throne of Eshnunna by Ishbi-Irra about 2100 B.C. Two years after this date Abda-El and Ushashum are mentioned in a text where they with about forty other Amorites receive gifts from Ishbi-Irra. If Whiting's reconstruction of the seal inscription is correct, however, Abda-El is here given the title "rabiān Amurrim." This would be the first occurrence of a title to be held later only by the king of Larsa and one Diyala ruler. The use of this title would seem to indicate that Abda-El was a tribal chieftain of high status. The Eshnunna texts also provide evidence that in addition to the marriage between Nurahum's daughter and the son of Abda-El, Nurahum's nephew Bilalama, the son of Kirikiri, was married to a daughter of Abda-El.<sup>20</sup>

The seal which Nurahum gave to his son-in-law (C-8a-c) is of particular interest because of the distinctive character of the standing male figure on the seal: he has a small, pointed beard and an unusual hairstyle or hat, with a peak of hair at the back of the neck. The seal shows the seated king with a cup, a crescent moon above, and a small interceding goddess standing on a low platform between the two main figures.

Nurahum was succeeded by his brother Kirikiri. A fine seal of lapis lazuli with a gold cap (C-9a-c) found in the palace at Eshnunna was a gift from Kirikiri to his son Bilalama. The seal was originally on a pin, perhaps of silver. The opening lines of the inscription invoke the god Tishpak, and it is Tishpak and not the ruler who is seated at the right. A man, presumably Bilalama, stands before the god. A goddess stands behind the man, and a small goddess is in the field in front.<sup>21</sup> This seal is especially interesting

in that it is one of the few extant seals represented by ancient impressions. Three sealings made with this seal have been found at Eshnunna.<sup>22</sup>

On another sealing from the palace is found the impression of a seal given by the ruler Bilalama to Wusumbeli, a singer. The scene on the seal is only partially preserved, but shows a goddess leading a man (C-10).<sup>23</sup>

The ruler Ur-Ningishzida, probably a contemporary of Gungunum of Larsa, gave a lapis lazuli seal to his son Irrabani.<sup>24</sup> The seated king has a long, flowing beard. One man stands before him and another is led forward by a goddess. The men are represented identically, with short beards and round caps of hair or hats, but since the seal inscription shows signs of being recut over an earlier inscription, any connection between the seal scene and the persons mentioned in the inscription is unlikely (C-11a).

Approximately contemporary with this seal is the impression of one from Susa which Idadu, an ensi of Susa, gave to a man called Kuk-Simut, perhaps a scribe.<sup>25</sup> On this seal the king sits on the left, and the figure approaching him carries a crook and is followed by a goddess (C-11b).

Next from Eshnunna is a sealing found in the Ipiq-Adad/Ibal-pi-El Palace, of a seal presented by a ruler whose name is not preserved, to someone called Beliti. No scene is extant.<sup>26</sup>

The last example from Eshnunna is represented by an impression (C-12a-b) of a seal which Ibal-pi-El gave to his wife, whose name is only partially preserved.<sup>27</sup> The scene, which is reconstructed from several rollings, is interesting in that the figure at the right, which, based on comparisons with other sealings, should be the king, is standing and wears a long robe. The figure at the left is almost certainly a woman and not a goddess, although she seems to be wearing an elaborate headdress. The impressions are too fragmentary to enable us to know whether there are more figures in the scene.

Since Ibal-pi-El's reign began about 1850 B.C., the span of time covered by the entire group of presentation seals was approximately 200 years. Although no later examples of the type are known, one item which is similar to the seals is a bead presented by Shilhak-Inshushinak of Susa to his daughter Bar-Uli.<sup>28</sup> It dates from more than 700 years after the last presentation seal. The inscription records the gift, and the king, seated in a chair, is shown with a small female figure, presumably his daughter (D-1).

Although the total number of presentation seals is very small, totalling only twenty-two out of the many thousands of seals and impressions known from the period, some general patterns may be noted. All of the Ur III seals, for example, depict only two human figures, the king and another man. Goddesses are represented only twice in the Ur III group, while in the Eshnunna group of five seals, a total of five goddesses are represented. On the Ur III seals the king is shown standing on those seals which he gives to a courier and to a comptroller, and is shown wearing a short kilt only on those seals on which he is shown standing. On both of the seals on which the king is shown standing, the man facing him carries a baton. In the Eshnunna group of seals, the ruler is shown wearing a long robe and standing only on the seal which is given to his wife.

The following persons receive seals at Ur:

- two chancellors (sukkal-mah)
- four comptrollers (šadubba), one of whom is also a šabra official;  
and another of whom is also an ensi and the king's uncle.
- one priest of Enlil.
- two couriers
- one scribe

two cupbearers  
 one cook  
 one seafaring merchant

The following persons receive seals at Eshnunna:

two rulers' sons  
 one ruler's son-in-law  
 one ruler's wife  
 one singer

Seals seem therefore to be given more often to members of the ruler's immediate family at Eshnunna than at Ur. At Ur, however, we know that at least one person who receives a seal belongs to the royal family, and almost all of the other persons appear from the nature of the transactions in which they are involved to be closely connected with the royal household—high officials of the palace who represent the king himself in transactions in other cities, or palace officials who distribute or collect provisions or offerings which concern the royal family. The three officials whose titles are translated as “cook” and “cupbearer” are also high palace officials.

The evidence is not conclusive, but I would suggest that the presentation seals are not seals of office presented as a matter of course by the king to high government officials, but that they are given only to specially privileged individuals who have a close personal connection with the palace, and that the possession of such a seal is indicative of more status than the possession of an arad-zu seal. Based on the evidence of the Eshnunna seals, the possessors of presentation seals may often have been members or relatives of the royal family. I believe, therefore, that the seals may have been personal gifts of the king and I think that the scenes in the seals present a certain amount of evidence that they were made to order for the person to whom the seal was given. The quality of the carving is almost always of the highest, indicating that only the best seal cutters were employed, and there is apparently some attempt made by the seal cutter to create portraits of the persons depicted, as in the very fine and distinctive representation of Ibbi-Sin, the atypical representation of the head of the Amorite Ushashum, and the depiction of someone who is apparently Ibal-pi-El's wife on the seal which he presents to her.

In conclusion, I feel that at least in the category of presentation seals, we are dealing with a personal gift of the king, ordered by him for a specific individual, and designed by the seal cutter to represent closely as possible both the donor and the recipient of the gift.

#### NOTES

1. The presentation scene has been most thoroughly discussed by E. Douglas van Buren, “Homage to a Deified King,” *ZA* 50 (1952), pp. 92-120.
2. E. Sollberger, *JCS* 19 (1965), pp. 26-32.
3. I wish to express my thanks at this time to Robert Whiting, who has brought the Diyala material to my attention and who has in addition helped to interpret the content of the tablets containing presentation seal impressions, as well as the background of the individuals involved in the texts.
4. V. Scheil, *RA* 23 (1926), pp. 36f.
5. *TCL* 2 5552.
6. *BRM* 3 37 and 38.

7. Robert M. Whiting, "Tiš-atal of Nineveh and Babati, Uncle of Šu-Sin," JCS 28 (1976), pp. 173-82.
8. ITT 2 937. See also V. Scheil, RA 22, pp. 147-48.
9. E. Sollberger, JCS 19 (1965), pp. 26-32.
10. An.Bi. 12, pp. 276-81.
11. UE 10 436 + 437 + 439 = UET 1 88.
12. UET 3 1383.
13. Eames Coll. W1.
14. UET 3 242.
15. UET 3 252.
16. UET 3 45 + UET 1 96 and 97.
17. UET 3 41.
18. UE 10 438.
19. PBS 14 284 = 13 5.
20. As. 30-T 757 and OIP 43, Seal Legend 10. Information on the chronology at Eshnunna has been supplied to me by Robert Whiting. In addition, a complete discussion of this seal inscription as well as the other material from Eshnunna, only touched upon here, is included in his forthcoming publication, *Old Babylonian Letters from Tell Asmar*.
21. OIC 13, p. 19 = OIP 43, p. 215f. = OIP 72 no. 709. Edith Porada has suggested (personal communication) that this seal is partially recut and that the goddess (in a somewhat later style than the other figures) was added when the inscription was recut; see details in C-9c.
22. OIP 43, p. 22 and p. 145. The seal impression numbers are As. 30-T 643 (from M 31-1, Level ca. 32); As. 30-T 650 (from O 30-8, 2-2.5 m. below burned layer); and As. 31-T 256 (from below tablet clay in door between O 30 17 and O 20-18). (Sollberger's note 26, JCS 19, is misplaced and should refer to p instead of r).
23. OIP 43, p. 247 no. 17. [Since this article was written, Robert Whiting has discovered an additional presentation seal impression among the Tell Asmar tablets, As. 30-T 412. The seal is presented to Šillumrašub, who is not further identified, by the ruler Ušurawassu, a successor of Bilalama. The scene on the seal is not preserved.]
24. Moortgat, Rollsiegel 254 = OIP 43, p. 113.
25. RA 22, p. 148.
26. OIP 43, p. 157 no. 64.
27. OIP 43, p. 154 no. 47a.
28. BM 113886 (JCS 19, p. 31).

## Sealing Practices on House and Land Sale Documents at Eshnunna in the Isin-Larsa Period

by

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During the Oriental Institute's excavations at Tell Asmar, ancient Eshnunna, a moderately large number of legal documents were found in a vertical drain in one of the rooms of the palace.<sup>1</sup> Among these there were about sixty tablets recording real estate sales dealing with fields and houses. These tablets cover the period from the rulers Usurawassu to Warassa, about 1950 B.C. to 1850 B.C.. Most of the tablets are written in a rigidly standardized format which remains constant throughout the period. Each document written in this format has one or two seals applied to it. These sealings and their relationship to the content of the tablet form the basis of this paper.

Physically, the tablets have a distinctive plano-convex shape (D-3a-b). The obverse is quite flat while the reverse has a distinct curvature. The corners are squared off and the edges are flat. The writing is regular and precise. The care taken in the execution of these tablets indicates that they were official, legal documents, and the find spot and the length of time covered by the collection indicate that they were part of a palace archive.

The contents of the tablets are likewise distinctive. The two outline contracts below give the standard formula for the sale of a field or a house. While the formulary as a whole is unique, most of the phraseology is familiar and self-explanatory.<sup>2</sup> What we are concerned with here are only those phrases which affect or regulate the application of the seals to the tablet. These are phrases 3 and 10, which identify the seller of the property and the palace official who oversees the transaction, respectively. Each contract identifies by name an individual who is called either a shassukkum (SAG.SUG<sub>5</sub>) or a kakikkum (KA.KI) depending on whether the sale is a field or a house.<sup>3</sup> The seal of this individual is always impressed on the left in the space following the names of the witnesses (D-3b). The appearance of other seals on the tablet, however, is governed by phrase 3, which identifies the seller of the property.

Phrase 3 always reads either KI PN or KI LUGAL.(LA.)KA.TA. That is, the property is bought from an individual or "from (the property) of the king." When the seller is an individual (occasionally several individuals, usually a family group), his seal is impressed on the right-hand side of the space following the names of the witnesses, next to that of the shassukkum or kakikkum (D-4); however, when the sale is made "from (the property) of the king," the seal of the shassukkum or the kakikkum is again impressed on the right in this space so that there are two impressions of the same seal side by side (D-3b).

While each shassukkum or kakikkum had his own personal seal, normally of the arad-zu type dedicated to the ruler of Eshnunna, the seals of the individual sellers used on these tablets are always of the burgul type, that is, they were made especially for the occasion.<sup>4</sup> This is quite evident from an examination of the seal impressions. In the first place, the signs of the inscriptions on these seals are large and crudely cut when compared to the personal seals of the shassukkum or kakikkum and the inscription is limited to

a simple identification of the individual such as “PN son/daughter of PN-2.” Secondly, when more than one individual is identified as the seller, all the sellers are listed on one seal, usually in the same order as in the tablet. One such seal contains as many as seven names (a man, his wife, and five children) (D-4).

It is difficult to visualize the rationale behind the use of the burgul seals for these transactions. Certainly anyone who was affluent enough to own property would have had his own personal seal. Yet not one personal seal is found used by a seller in any of these documents.

The seals were also impressed on the lower and left edges of the tablet in the manner which became standard in the Old Babylonian period. In addition, the seal of the shassukum or the kakikum was impressed over the entire surface of the tablet before the text of the document was written (D-3a-b).

No other seals were applied to these documents and although each tablet contains the names of approximately ten witnesses, none of the witnesses ever seals the tablet. Similarly, the seal of the purchaser never appears on the tablet.

The number of seals appearing on each tablet is thus limited to two and is frequently only one. What is unusual and distinctive about these sale documents is that the seal of a palace official appears on each one. While it is easy to explain why the seal of the shassukum or kakikum should appear on sales made by the palace where he undoubtedly acted as the representative of the ruler, it is more difficult to see why his seal should appear on a transaction between two presumably private individuals.

Some explanation for this may be found in the formulary of these documents which is rather terse in comparison with other Old Babylonian sale contracts. The two outline contracts (see below) show us that the standard sale contract gives only the size and price of the property, the names of the seller and buyer, a statement that the price was paid, and the names of the witnesses. Completely absent are typically Old Babylonian clauses dealing with title to the property and the right to sell it, clearing of claims by a third party, satisfaction of the parties to the sale with its terms, penalties for making a claim after the sale, and so on.<sup>5</sup> Also lacking is the bukānum clause, standard in most Old Babylonian sale contracts, which is found in some other contracts from this region.<sup>6</sup> Immediately following the names of the witnesses is the space in which the seal of the shassukum or kakikum and (if the sale was not made by the palace) a burgul seal listing the names of the sellers were impressed. Following this is a statement which is in its shortest form “the witnesses before whom PN, the shassukum/kakikum, IN.GÍD.” The significance of this statement depends on the interpretation of IN.GÍD. We should expect that IN.GÍD here equals *ishdud* “he measured” with respect to the field/house which is the object of the sale. This would imply that the shassukum or the kakikum acting as an official of the palace guaranteed the boundaries of the property being sold, and would account for the presence of his seal on every sale contract.

However, another interpretation of IN.GÍD has become apparent which, although at variance with our present lexical information, seems to make more sense. The standard sale contract is written in formalized Sumerian, but whenever some special circumstance which is outside the normal formulary is introduced into the contract, it is written in Akkadian. In one house sale contract, I have found the following closing statement: “the witnesses before whom ‘his foundation was torn out’; he swore in the name of the king; the divine emblem was drawn out; and Iddin-Sin, the kakikum, rolled his seal ([i]k-nu-uk’).”<sup>8</sup>

The fact that *iknuk* replaces the usual IN.GÍD suggests that Sumerian IN.GÍD is equivalent to *iknuk* “he sealed,” even though a lexical equivalent GÍD = *kanākum* “to seal” is not otherwise known.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, it is more plausible that the witnesses listed in the tablet observed the sealing of the tablet rather than the surveying of a field or house.

The implications of this interpretation for the significance of the seal impressions on the tablet are extensive. The closing statement of the sale document states that the persons listed in the tablet witnessed not the

sale, but simply the sealing of the contract by the shassukum or kakikum. This implies that this seal on the contract was sufficient to guarantee the legality of the transaction including clear title and right to sell the property as well as its freedom from claims by any third party. The implications go even beyond this to suggest the extent to which the palace controlled and regulated the ownership of property at Eshnunna during this period. It must be remembered that all these sale documents were found in one location in the palace and must certainly represent an official archive, perhaps the remains of the "title office."

A few words need to be said about the seal impressions themselves, or rather about the inscriptions, since this is the only part of the seal which was impressed on the tablet and any traces of the seal designs which may be visible are purely accidental. Of course, there are no traces of any designs on the burgul seals used by the sellers, but the personal seals of the palace officials usually show some traces of a "presentation scene" of the type which is common on the arad-zu seals of this and the preceding Ur III period (D-4).<sup>10</sup>

The inscriptions of the shassukum and kakikum seals are standard with a few exceptions.<sup>11</sup> Transliterations of all the seal inscriptions are given below and two have been translated. It should be noted that the seals always identify the owner as DUB.SAR only, never as SAG.SUG<sub>5</sub> or KA.KI, although the phrase DUR.ŠUB.BA is sometimes added after DUB.SAR. The meaning of this phrase is unknown to me. The seal inscriptions show us that the office of shassukum and kakikum often passed from father to son, since three generations are represented in each office. Although other individuals occur, sometimes intervening between a father and his son, it is interesting that only the members of these two families are called DUB.SAR DUR.ŠUB.BA in their seal inscriptions.

### Outline Contracts

The two outline contracts give the standard formula for the sale of a field or house at Eshnunna. Words or phrases in parentheses may or may not occur, while words or phrases not in parentheses occur in every contract. Words or phrases separated by a slant line are free variants, but one or the other always occurs.

The phrases which occur have been divided and numbered solely for ease of discussion. The order of the phrases is always the same.

- § 1 Description of the property
- § 2 Price of the property
- § 3 Identification of the seller(s), represented here by the letter A, either an individual (or group of individuals) or the palace (KI LUGAL.(LA.)KA.TA "from (the property) of the king")
- § 4 Statement of purchase and the name(s) of the purchaser(s) (represented by the letter B)
- § 5 Statement that an individual (identified by name [C]) weighed out the purchase price
- § 6 Statement that the palace received the purchase price, occurring only when the sale is made by the palace
- § 7 Names of the witnesses, the first three or four always identified as the neighbors of the house or field
- § 8 Space in which the seals were impressed (only the portion bearing the inscription)
- § 9 Statement that the persons listed in § 7 were witnesses to the acts enumerated in § 10.
- § 10 The final statement of this phrase is that the kakikum or shassukum (identified by name [D]) did IN.GÍD, and this statement always occurs. Other statements may or may not occur
- § 11 Date: only a year, never a month and day

	Field	House
§ 1	X (IKU) GÁN A.ŠĀ (+location)	X GU.ZA É.DÙ.A
§ 2	ŠĀM+ÀM.BI Y MA.NA KÙ.BABBAR	ŠĀM+ÀM.BI Y MA.NA KÙ.BABBAR
§ 3	KI A	KI A
§ 4	B IN.ŠI.(IN.)ŠĀM	B IN.ŠI.(IN.)ŠĀM
§ 5	C KÙ.DÍM/SIMUG KÙ.BI Ì.LAL	C KÙ.DÍM/SIMUG KÙ.BI Ì.LAL
§ 6	(KÙ.BI É.GAL.LA BA.AN.KU <sub>4</sub> )	(KÙ.BI É.GAL.LA BA.AN.KU <sub>4</sub> )
§ 7	IGI witnesses ÚS.SA.DÙ A.ŠĀ.GA.ME more witnesses Ù final witness (normally DUB.SAR)	IGI witnesses ÚS.SA.DÙ É.A.ME / ÚS.SA É.A.ME.ŠÈ more witnesses Ù final witnesses (normally DUB.SAR)
§ 8	seals: D D/A	seals: D D/A
§ 9	LÚ.INIM.MA.BI.ME IGI.NE.NE.ŠÈ	LÚ.INIM.MA.BI.ME IGI.NE.NE.ŠÈ
§ 10	(MU LUGAL.(LA.)BI IN.PÀD)  D SAG.SUG <sub>5</sub> .KE <sub>4</sub> IN.GÍD	(SUHUŠ.A.NI ÍB.TA.BU)  D KA.KI IN.GÍD
§ 11	date: year only	date: year only

### Rulers and Officials at Eshnunna

The following is a list of individuals attested in sale contracts arranged according to the rulers under whom they served.

Ruler	šassukkum	kakikkum
Ušurawassu		I-la-nu-um son of Ur-é-la
Azuzum	A-at-ta-ì-lí	I-din- <sup>d</sup> EN.ZU son of Dan- <sup>d</sup> Tišpak
Ur-Ninmar	Hu-um-zum* son of A-bi-lu-lu	I-din- <sup>d</sup> EN.ZU son of Dan- <sup>d</sup> Tišpak
Ur-Ningishzida	Ku-ru-za son of Hu-um-zum <sup>d</sup> EN.ZU-i-din-nam* son of Ku-ru-za Šu- <sup>d</sup> En.líl son of Ki-nam-iš-ti	I-din- <sup>d</sup> MAR.TU* son of I-din- <sup>d</sup> EN.ZU



Ruler	šassukkum	kakikkum
Ipiq-Adad	Šu-mi-a-hi-a son of A-[hu]?-um	I-din- <sup>d</sup> MAR.TU* son of I-din- <sup>d</sup> EN.ZU Ìr-ra-ba-ni son of Šu- <sup>d</sup> Da-ba-an
Belakum	A-ta-wa-qar son of Iš-me- <sup>d</sup> EN.ZU La-lu-um son of Šu- <sup>d</sup> Ti[špak]? Ib-ni- <sup>d</sup> [X] son of [        ]	En-num- <sup>d</sup> EN.ZU* son of I-din- <sup>d</sup> MAR.TU La-lu-um* son of I-din- <sup>d</sup> MAR.TU Wu-zum-be-li
Warassa	Lú-ib-gal son of [X-x-x-x]	

\*DUB.SAR DUR.ŠUB.BA

## Seal Inscriptions

Ruler	šassukkum	kakikkum		
Ušurawassu	Ú-šur-a-wa-zu na-ra-am <sup>d</sup> Tišpak ENSÍ Áš-nun-na <sup>ki</sup> Hu-um-zum DUB.SAR DUMU A-bi-lu-lu	Ušurawassu beloved of (the god) Tišpak ensi of Eshnunna; Humzum the scribe son of Abilulu	Ú-šur-a-wa-zu na-ra-am <sup>d</sup> Tišpak I-la-nu-um DUMU Ur-é-la DUB.SAR ARÁD.ZU	Ušurawassu beloved of Tišpak; Ilanum, son of Ur-Ela, scribe, (is) your servant
Azuzum	A-zu-zum ENSÍ Áš-nun-na <sup>ki</sup> A-at-ta-ì-lí DUB.SAR ARÁD.ZU		A-zu-zum na-ra-am <sup>d</sup> Tišpak I-din- <sup>d</sup> EN.ZU DUB.SAR DUMU Dan- <sup>d</sup> Tišpak ARÁD.ZU	
Ur-Ninmar	Ur- <sup>d</sup> Nin-mar <sup>ki</sup> ENSÍ Áš-nun-na <sup>ki</sup> Hu-um-zum DUB.SAR DUR.ŠUB.BA DUMU A-bi-lu-lu ARÁD.ZU		Ur- <sup>d</sup> Nin-mar <sup>ki</sup> na-ra-am <sup>d</sup> Tišpak I-din- <sup>d</sup> EN.ZU DUB.SAR DUMU Dan- <sup>d</sup> Tišpak ARÁD.ZU	

Ruler	šassukkum	kakikkum
Ur-Ningishzida	Ur- <sup>d</sup> Nin-giš-zi-da na-ra-am <sup>d</sup> Tišpak ENSÍ Áš-nun-na <sup>ki</sup> Ku-ru-za DUB.SAR DUMU Ғu-um-zum ARÁD.ZU  Ur- <sup>d</sup> Nin-giš-zi-da ENSÍ Áš-nun-na <sup>ki</sup> <sup>d</sup> EN.ZU-i-din-nam DUB.SAR DUR.ŠUB.BA DUMU Ku-ru-za ARÁD.ZU  Ur- <sup>d</sup> Nin-giš-zi-da ENSÍ Áš-nun-na <sup>ki</sup> Šu- <sup>d</sup> En.líl DUB.SAR DUMU Ki-nam-iš-ti [ARÁD.ZU]  Ur- <sup>d</sup> Nin-giš-zi-da ENSÍ Áš-nun-na <sup>ki</sup> Šu- <sup>d</sup> En.líl DUB.SAR DUMU Ki-nam-iš-ti [ARÁD.ZU]	Ur- <sup>d</sup> Nin-giš-zi-da ENSÍ Áš-nun-na <sup>ki</sup> I-din- <sup>d</sup> MAR.TU DUB.SAR DUR.ŠUB.BA DUMU I-din- <sup>d</sup> EN.ZU  ARÁD.ZU
Ipiq-Adad	I-bi-iq- <sup>d</sup> IM ENSÍ Áš-nun-na <sup>ki</sup> Šu-mi-a-hi-a DUB.SAR DUMU A-[x-x]l-um ARÁD.ZU	I-bi-iq- <sup>d</sup> IM ENSÍ Áš-nun-na <sup>ki</sup> I-din- <sup>d</sup> MAR.TU DUB.SAR DUMU I-din- <sup>d</sup> EN.ZU ARÁD.ZU  I-bi-iq- <sup>d</sup> IM ENSÍ Áš-nun-na <sup>ki</sup> I-din- <sup>d</sup> MAR.TU DUB.SAR DUR.ŠUB.BA [DUMU I-din- <sup>d</sup> EN.ZU ARÁD.ZU]  I-bi-iq- <sup>d</sup> IM na-ra-am <sup>d</sup> Tišpak

Ruler	šassukkum	kakikkum
Ipiq-Adad		ENSÍ Áš-nun-na <sup>ki</sup> Ìr-ra-ba-ni DUB.SAR DUMU Šu- <sup>d</sup> Da-ba-an ARÁD.ZU
Belakum	Be-la-kum na-ra-am <sup>d</sup> Tišpak ENSÍ Áš-nun-na <sup>ki</sup> A-ta-wa-qar DUB.SAR DUMU Iš-me- <sup>d</sup> EN.ZU ARÁD.ZU  Be-la-kum ENSÍ Áš-nun-na <sup>ki</sup> La-lu-um DUB.SAR DUMU Šu- <sup>d</sup> Ti[špak]? [ARÁD.ZU]  [Be-la]-kum na-ra-am <sup>d</sup> Tišpak Ib- <sup>ni-d</sup> ʿX <sup>1</sup> DUB. [SAR] DUMU [            ] ARÁD.[ZU]	[Be-la-kum] na-ra-am <sup>d</sup> Tišpak ENSÍ Áš-nun-na <sup>ki</sup> En-num- <sup>d</sup> EN.ZU DUB.SAR DUR.ŠUB.BA DUMU I-din- <sup>d</sup> MAR.TU ARÁD.ZU  Be-la-kum ENSÍ Áš-nun-na <sup>ki</sup> La-lu-um DUB.SAR DUMU I-din- <sup>d</sup> MAR.TU [ARÁD.ZU] La-lu-um [            ]? DUB.SAR DUR.ŠUB.BA DUMU I-din- <sup>d</sup> MAR.TU ʿARÁD Be-la <sup>1</sup> -kum
Warassa	ARÁD-za ENSÍ Áš-nun-na <sup>ki</sup> Lú-ib-gal DUB.SAR ʿDUMU X-x-x-x <sup>1</sup> ARÁD.ZU	

## NOTES

1. The room was actually in what had been the Shu-Sin (Gimil-Sin) temple, which was converted to secular use some time during the reign of Bilalama. For a discussion of the findspot (O 30:7) see OIP 43, p. 79.
2. Philological commentary has generally been dispensed with in this paper. This aspect of these tablets will be fully taken up in a projected volume dealing with all the legal texts found at Tell Asmar. For the convenience of the reader, a summary interpretation of the sale documents is given here. The numbering of the phrases is solely for ease of discussion.
3. These two professions were the subject of a paper, "The kakikkum and the shassukkum at Eshnunna," which I read at the meeting of the American Oriental Society in March, 1973. The purpose of the paper was to establish the function of these two officials. Although it had long been established that the shassukkum was a "field recorder," it was not known that the kakikkum performed the same function with respect to houses. The house and field sale contracts from Tell Asmar make this distinction quite clear.
4. Burgul seals are so called because this is the Sumerian word for "seal-cutter" (Akkadian parkullum or purkullum). See the discussion by J. Renger in this volume.
5. See, in general, M. San Nicolò, *Die Schlussklauseln der altbabylonischen Kauf- und Tauschverträge* (Munich, 1922).
6. D. O. Edzard, "Die bukānum-Formel der altbabylonischen Kaufverträge und ihre sumerische Entsprechung," *ZA* 60 (1970), pp. 8-53.
7. LÚ INIM.MA.BI.ME IGI.NE.NE.ŠÈ PN SAG.SUG<sub>5</sub>.KE<sub>4</sub> / KA.KI IN.GÍD
8. LÚ INIM.MA.BI.ME  
IGI.NE.NE.ŠÈ  
SUHUŠ.A.NI ÍB.TA.BU  
[M]U LUGAL.BI IN.PÀD  
[šu-r]i-nu-<sup>1</sup>um<sup>1</sup> i-na-zi-ih-ma  
[I-din-<sup>d</sup>EN.ZU] KA.KI  
[i]k-nu-<sup>1</sup>uk<sup>1</sup>
9. See CAD K, p. 136b, s.v. kanāku, lexical section.
10. See the discussion by J. Franke in this volume.
11. See I. J. Gelb in this volume for a listing and translation of standard seal inscriptions.

## Legal Aspects of Sealing in Ancient Mesopotamia\*

by

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Among the objects bearing seal impressions, clay tablets are, I believe, the largest group.<sup>1</sup> As for the types of tablets with seal impressions, I shall briefly mention letters, administrative texts, legal texts and even one literary text,<sup>2</sup> but I will restrict my remarks to a discussion of legal documents and the significance of the seal impressions found on them.<sup>3</sup> To understand this significance fully, I would like to make a few remarks on the nature of Mesopotamian legal documents in general.<sup>4</sup>

Many of us have, at one time or another, concluded a legal transaction, be it the rental of an apartment, the purchase of a car, or the obtaining of a loan. In most if not all such cases our signature, the signature of the other party to the transaction, or both signatures were put on a paper with a lot of small print on the reverse. Sometimes we realized the significance of the signature when we tried to get out of an agreement: the signature has created certain obligations to be fulfilled by us. To sum up: a legal document in our society is usually a written instrument with signatures of one or both parties to such contracted agreement; and these signatures acknowledge and create obligations to be fulfilled or rendered by such parties after the contract is thus put into force: for instance, the buyer has to pay the price for an object and the seller is required to hand over the object to the buyer.

Mesopotamian legal documents are of a different nature; they are styled as a protocol written from the viewpoint of the witnesses.<sup>5</sup> They report a transaction in the past tense, that is, the wording of a legal document conveys the idea that a sale, division of property, etc., had already been concluded at the time when the document was written, and that the price had been paid, the seller had acknowledged receipt of the payment, etc. In quite a number of cases the documents also record that certain symbolic acts had been performed at the time when the transaction actually took place. In the case of a sale of a slave the slave passed or was made to pass over a pestle. The same symbolic act was adapted to the sale of fields,<sup>6</sup> or a clod of dirt was thrown into a canal when a field was sold.<sup>7</sup> Finally the document mentions that the parties to the transaction have taken an oath promising not to raise a claim against the object involved or to sue each other. In a few cases it is explicitly stated that this oath was taken in the presence of witnesses who are mentioned by name.<sup>8</sup> The document is thus clearly divided into two parts: a report of what had happened and an agreement concerning any future action or non-action resulting from such contract. Before I go into further details, I should stress another aspect of Mesopotamian legal documents. These texts are written on clay, and a signature as a distinctive sign of a particular person was unknown. Since in our culture signing or initialing together with the exchange of duplicates to the parties involved is an acceptable means of guaranteeing the authenticity of a document, we may ask how the authenticity of a clay tablet was assured. Originally the problem was solved by placing the tablet in an envelope of clay on which the entire text of the document itself was repeated, and seals were impressed.<sup>9</sup> In the first millennium B.C. envelopes were no longer in use. Instead, two identically worded copies of the contract were issued, sealed and given to the two parties.<sup>10</sup> Whenever a dispute over the agreement arose, the

unbroken envelope containing the tablet or the two identical copies of the contract would be presented to the judge. He would then call the witnesses and would decide the case on their testimony and other available instruments of evidence.<sup>11</sup>

That the tablet was an instrument of evidence is well illustrated by an Old Babylonian letter which runs as follows: "Mr. Etel-pi-Marduk, to whom you sold an unimproved lot several years ago—when he wanted to build a house on the lot you prevented him from doing so by claiming this lot from him. But he has brought to me the contract which states that he bought the lot from you. I have looked at the document. It has an envelope, your seal impression and the names of the five witnesses are on the tablet. If he would show the tablet to the judges you would have no chance of winning the case, therefore give the lot back to Etel-pi-Marduk."<sup>12</sup> Note that in court litigations evidence coming from witnesses or based on an ordeal was always regarded as superior to that of the written document.<sup>13</sup> The Mesopotamian legal document is basically an instrument of evidence, whereas present-day contracts have dispositive force,<sup>14</sup> best expressed by phrases like "I herewith sell, purchase," etc. That is, the Mesopotamian document attests that a legal agreement has been concluded, while a modern contract creates a legal agreement. However, I am not saying that one cannot find several dispositive elements in Mesopotamian legal documents in a system of law which developed and changed in its history of more than two thousand years.<sup>15</sup>

In a similar manner, Mesopotamian sales documents could serve to establish title, but they were not title instruments in the strict sense. According to the code of Hammurapi title could be proved simply by calling the witnesses before whom a sale had taken place, the sale need not even have been recorded in writing.<sup>16</sup>

Turning now to the actual sealing of legal documents, I must make some cautionary remarks. A comprehensive account of sealing is difficult to give because (1) the seals were usually impressed on the envelope of the tablet and only rarely on the tablet itself, and in many instances the envelopes have not survived;<sup>17</sup> (2) the seal inscriptions are often illegible, or they have been destroyed, or the seal impressions show only the figurative representation, and no other identification of the seal is possible; (3) in quite a number of text publications seal impressions are ignored or not adequately published. However, there remains enough evidence to make the following statement: a legal document in ancient Mesopotamia was generally sealed either by the witnesses or by the party to an agreement who relinquished a right (for instance, the seller in a sale) or assumed an obligation (the debtor in a loan). In instances where both parties assumed equal and mutual obligations (exchange, partnership, division of property, marriage)<sup>18</sup> both parties sealed. In certain cases public officials put seals on seemingly private contracts.<sup>19</sup>

We have now to ask what was the significance of the sealing of a tablet by either the witnesses and the party or parties. I think I should approach this question by illustrating some sealed tablets from different periods, starting with the Old Babylonian and extending to the Seleucid period. I will also more or less simultaneously mention relevant phrases from the tablets pertaining to the seal impressions.

### **Old Babylonian Period (20th-17th Centuries B.C.)**

Seals were rolled usually on the left margin of the obverse and reverse of the envelope (D-6a-b, D-7). The left edge and the lower and upper edges of the envelope were sometimes also used for seal impressions (D-6c-e). There exist other documents, mainly receipts, loan contracts, etc., where a seal was rolled on the entire surface of the tablet before the tablet was inscribed (D-3a-b).<sup>20</sup>

We can also observe certain differences in the sealing practices between different areas of Babylonia during the Old Babylonian period. Tablets from northern Babylonia and Nippur often bear a by-script next to a seal impression identifying it as the seal of a certain person. The by-script is, as far as I am aware, always written in a smaller script than the rest of the text.<sup>21</sup>

Texts from southern Babylonia and from the Diyala region, with a very few exceptions, do not bear such by-scripts.<sup>22</sup> The texts from southern Babylonia carry in most instances a clause saying that the witnesses have sealed the document,<sup>23</sup> as far as published copies permit verification, the seals of several witnesses are actually found on the tablet.<sup>24</sup> In other cases the tablet states that "his seal was rolled on the tablet," referring to the party who was required to seal,<sup>25</sup> or the text mentions the fact that witnesses or the party or parties to the agreement have sealed.<sup>26</sup>

If a person did not own a seal several possibilities existed to solve the problem: (1) A seal was made for the particular event (D-8a). These seals we call *burgul* seals, because the craftsman who fabricated them was called *bur-gul* (Akkadian *purkullu*).<sup>27</sup> These seals were made from inexpensive material such as clay which made it possible to fabricate such a seal within a short time.<sup>28</sup> The *bur-gul* appeared as a witness on the tablet along with the scribe.<sup>29</sup> As far as we can determine *burgul* seals are very common on texts from Nippur. But there are also examples from other places such as Ur, Larsa and Eshnunna;<sup>30</sup> the most notable use outside Nippur is a group of texts from northern Babylonia associated with the king Mannanāja,<sup>31</sup> but I am quite sure that there are no *burgul* seal impressions on the texts from Sippar. I have worked with several hundred Sippar texts, especially to study the seal impressions, and I have not found any evidence for *burgul* seals.<sup>32</sup> (2) Instead of a person's seal the hem of his garment was impressed on the tablet (D-8b).<sup>33</sup> So far, examples of this practice come from Nippur<sup>34</sup> and Sippar.<sup>35</sup> In a few instances one finds next to the garment impression a by-script saying "Seal of PN."<sup>36</sup> (3) The custom of impressing one's fingernail<sup>37</sup> into the tablet is attested on several tablets from Dilbat<sup>38</sup> and on one from Ur.<sup>39</sup> This custom is also well attested on tablets from Susa dating to the Old Babylonian period.<sup>40</sup> (4) In texts from Nippur one finds occasionally a by-script of the type "seal of PN" but with no seal or hem impression beside it, simply an empty space.<sup>41</sup> (5) I know quite a number of instances among Sippar texts where the by-script declares that a seal impression is that of a particular person; but there is no prosopographic evidence to link the legend on the seal with any person mentioned in the document.<sup>42</sup> As explanation one can suggest that we are dealing with an heirloom seal or that a person unrelated to the transaction lent his seal to one of the parties.<sup>43</sup> The practice of using another person's seal was particularly employed when *nadītu*'s<sup>44</sup> had to seal a document, since women did not seal documents normally as witnesses or as parties.<sup>45</sup>

### Middle Babylonian Period (14th-12th Centuries B.C.)

Middle Babylonian legal documents contain, at the end of the text, short notations of the type "seal of PN" (referring to the party who was obligated to seal).<sup>46</sup> But the notations are not—as in the by-script in Old Babylonian Sippar—written with smaller signs. These notations are usually placed after the date-formula,<sup>47</sup> but sometimes they are inserted between the list of witnesses and the date-formula.<sup>48</sup> A fuller text of the notation says "Seal of PN (that is, the party who seals) and the seals of the witnesses they have impressed."<sup>49</sup> If a party who was obligated to seal did not own a seal he could, as in the Old Babylonian period, use the hem of his garment or impress his fingernail. The usual notation on the tablet is "the hem of his garment instead of his seal"<sup>50</sup> or "his fingernail instead of his seal."<sup>51</sup> In most instances the tablet has fingernail marks impressed five times instead of a seal.<sup>52</sup> The most interesting notation occurs on a recently published text from Ur. There one reads at the end of the tablet (a sales contract): "Seal of PN (the seller); with the (cylinder) seal of somebody (else) it is sealed."<sup>53</sup>

### Nuzi (15th Century B.C.)

Usually both envelope and tablet are sealed (D-9a-b).<sup>54</sup> As in Middle Babylonian tablets, at Nuzi one finds at the end of the text not a by-script but the notation "Seal of PN," referring to the seals of the sealing party and the witnesses.<sup>55</sup> There are also notations of the type "Seal of PN who sold the field."<sup>56</sup>

The hem of a garment is also used as a substitute for a seal by a party to an agreement.<sup>57</sup> There is no evidence for impressions of the fingernail in texts from Nuzi.

### **Middle Assyrian Period (15th-12th Centuries B.C.)**

In Middle Assyrian texts<sup>58</sup> the seal of the party relinquishing a right or assuming an obligation is impressed on the top of the tablet, preceded only by a notation to that effect: "Seal of PN."<sup>59</sup> Then follows the seal impression, then the text of the contract; at the end of the text the seals of the witnesses are impressed.<sup>60</sup> I do not know any instances of impressions of hems of garments or fingernails.

### **Neo-Assyrian Period (9th-7th Centuries B.C.)**

The arrangement of the seal impressions on the tablets<sup>61</sup> in the Neo-Assyrian period is identical to that of the Middle Assyrian: The tablet starts with a notation: "Seal of PN (the owner of the slave who has been sold)."<sup>62</sup> The seal follows, and then comes the rest of the text. There is—to my knowledge—no indication that the witnesses or the scribe sealed the document.

In the Neo-Assyrian period the use of nail impressions is again attested. Usually the notation reads as follows: "They put their fingernail marks here instead of their seals."<sup>63</sup> A careful study of the pertinent texts may even reveal that no flesh-marks or fingerprints are visible around these nail impressions; an explanation: Mallowan found in Nimrud a kind of stamp with which to produce such nail-marks.<sup>64</sup>

Besides cylinder seals the use of a seal ring is attested—at least by the king: "I sealed with the royal (seal) ring . . . (and) I gave (it) to PN."<sup>65</sup>

An interesting fact is the payment of an extra fee to the person impressing his seal or fingernail into a tablet.<sup>66</sup>

### **Neo-Babylonian/Achaemenid Periods (7th-4th Centuries B.C.)**

The Neo-Babylonian period is characterized by significant innovations in things legal, both formal and material.<sup>67</sup> On the formal side the most obvious innovation is the abandonment of the old custom of using an envelope and the introduction of the duplicate tablet;<sup>68</sup> that is, a contract was written in duplicate and a copy given to each of the two parties involved in a legal agreement. Seals therefore were impressed on both tablets. The pertinent phrase referring to the sealing of the tablets is: "At the sealing of this tablet the following witnesses were present."<sup>69</sup> Stamp seals were common, and the use of the seal ring is also attested for this period (D-10).<sup>70</sup>

As in preceding periods seal-substitutes were used. I have so far no evidence for the hem of a garment impressed on a tablet. But nail-marks are quite frequent (D-11). The full formula referring to a nail-mark reads as follows: "Nail-marks of PN and PN-2, the sellers of the field, instead of their seals."<sup>71</sup> The text comes from Babylon; otherwise the use of nail-marks is said to be rare on texts from the city of Babylon but frequent on texts from Nippur during the time of the Chaldaean dynasty, the Achaemenid and Seleucid periods.<sup>72</sup> But I suspect that this statement is influenced by the one-sided picture resulting from the meticulous publication standards of the University of Pennsylvania series.<sup>73</sup> There are also nail-marks in some of the copies of Warka texts.<sup>74</sup>



### Seleucid Period (4th-1st Centuries B.C.)

The Seleucid period shows a few changes compared with the preceding Neo-Babylonian/Achaemenid period. The use of the ring for sealing purposes is now widespread.<sup>75</sup> As far as I am aware, all seal impressions on Seleucid tablets (D-12a) are marked with a by-script "ring of PN."<sup>76</sup> The use of finger-nail marks by the party obliged to seal is attested in a few instances.<sup>77</sup>

I want to conclude this somewhat monotonous enumeration of facts by discussing a type of bulla which exhibits a late development in the use of seals on legal documents in Mesopotamia and at the same time leads into the practice of sealing legal documents which was customary in the Hellenistic and Roman world (D-12b). Such bullae have been found in Uruk and other Mesopotamian cities.<sup>78</sup> They bear the impressions of seal rings similar or identical to those on the contemporary clay tablets.<sup>79</sup> These bullae were wrapped around a document of leather, papyrus or another organic writing material.<sup>80</sup> We may assume that, as was the case with the duplicate tablets written on clay, two identical copies of the document were usually given to the parties. But I would suggest that the new writing material together with the principles of contract writing customary in a different civilization require us to consider these seal impressions in their new cultural context rather than the old context of Mesopotamian legal practice.<sup>81</sup>

### Conclusions

It is clear from the outset that sealing a document or, to be more precise, a tablet with an envelope, was different from sealing a jar or the like. The idea was not to seal the envelope and make the enclosed tablet inaccessible, because sealings also occur quite frequently on the tablets inside the envelope.<sup>82</sup> And there are times when no envelope at all was used, but seals were impressed directly on the tablet. Finally, we know of many tablets which bear no seal at all. It can therefore be argued, on the basis of these facts, that sealing was not a mandatory precondition to create a valid legal document. On the other hand, it seems to me that the presence of witnesses was a *conditio sine qua non* in conducting a legal transaction.<sup>83</sup>

Also, the impression of one's seal does not have the function of a signature under a present-day contract or other legal document.<sup>84</sup>

To come, finally, to a positive assessment of the significance of sealing a legal document, let us start with a few Old Babylonian references where it is said that a person has denied that a seal is his or hers.<sup>85</sup> I think this shows how the sealing of a tablet by a person was considered by the society as binding this person to whatever the document was about.<sup>86</sup>

Thus, if the sealing of a tablet or envelope by a person, either as witness or as party, has a binding force we have to ask further what this binding force actually was. In general one can say that sealing a legal document was a way to authenticate it, to make it valid as an instrument of evidence. This is made quite clear in instances where a scribe's seal appears immediately under the docket<sup>87</sup> or where the seal of the scribe (who is listed in almost all Mesopotamian legal documents among the witnesses<sup>88</sup>) is specifically identified through a by-script.<sup>89</sup>

Similarly, the sealcutter, who in several areas during the Old Babylonian period is listed among the witnesses, is called in cases of dispute to authenticate the seals he cut for a particular legal transaction for the writing down of which he was present.

The other witnesses who sealed a legal document were bound by their sealing to testify about the transaction they had witnessed. This is particularly evident in the case of those witnesses to a legal transaction who, as pointed out earlier, relinquished certain claims against the object of the agreement or against<sup>90</sup> certain persons involved in the transaction which they had witnessed.

In a comparable way, the party relinquishing a right or assuming an obligation, who sealed a legal document recording a transaction to such effect, acknowledged by doing so the accuracy and authenticity of the legal document thus sealed.<sup>91</sup>

Even if, during the more than two thousand years of Mesopotamian legal history, sealing a legal document by a party did not have the full dispositive force of a signature placed under a present-day legal document, we certainly observe here the incipient stages of a legal concept in which one's signature or sealing became the sole prerequisite for creating a binding legal document.

## NOTES

\* The text of this paper is the written version of what was presented orally to the symposium. I have made minor changes and corrections. I have added a fair amount of annotations which on the one hand present the factual evidence for my statements and conclusions and on the other hand contain the results of my continuous occupation with the matter and the discussions at the symposium and afterwards. The more I have worked on the question of seals, sealings and sealing practices, the more I feel that my remarks on the following pages are only of a preliminary nature. But I believe that I have pointed out a number of unanswered questions and unsolved problems which will perhaps gain the attention of some of those who in the future may deal with legal and administrative texts.

The abbreviations used follow the system of the CAD, the chronology the system of S. Smith (reign of Hammurapi of Babylon from 1792-1750 B.C.).

1. For a representative collection of cuneiform data on seals, sealings, and sealing practices see CAD s.v. *kanāku* "to seal," *kaniktu* "sealed document," *kaniku* "sealed document, sealed bag, sealed tag," *kanku* adj. "sealed, under seal," *kanku* s. "seal, sealed document," *kunukku* "seal, cylinder seal, seal impression, sealed clay tablet"; see further *barāmu* "to seal," *birimtu* "seal impression," *birimu* "seal impression," *šugarruru* "to impress a seal," *unqu* "seal ring." For previous discussion of seals, sealings and sealing practices from a juridical point of view see E. Cassin, "Le Sceau: un fait de civilisation dans la Mésopotamie ancienne," *Annales—Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations* 1960, pp. 742-51; W. Eilers, "Réflexions sur les origines du droit en Mésopotamie," *Revue historique de droit français et étranger*, 4<sup>e</sup> Série, vol. 51 (1973), pp. 197f.; R. Haase, *Einführung in das Studium keilschriftlicher Rechtsquellen* (Wiesbaden, 1965), p. 11; V. Korošec, *Keilschriftrecht* (= *Handbuch der Orientalistik*, Erste Abt., Erg. Band III—*Orientalisches Recht*) (Leiden, 1964), p. 51; P. Koschaker, *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, vol. 9 (New York, 1933), pp. 211-19 s.v. "Law—Cuneiform Law"; M. San Nicolò, *Beiträge zur Rechtsgeschichte im Bereiche der keilschriftlichen Rechtsquellen* (Oslo, 1931), pp. 135-41; M. Schorr, *VAB* 5 (Leipzig, 1913), pp. xxxviiff. For more general discussions of seals, etc., see E. Kittel, *Siegel* (Braunschweig, 1970), especially pp. 7ff. on the Ancient Near East, and L. Wenger, *Pauly-Wissowa's Realencyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaften*, 2. Reihe 4. Halbband (Stuttgart, 1923), 2361-2448 s.v. *signum*, further L. Wenger, *Savigny-Zeitschrift*, Rom. Abt., vol. 42 (1921), pp. 616ff.
2. Cuneiform texts of archival character (as distinguished from monumental texts [mainly royal inscriptions], literary, and religious texts) consist of letters, legal, and administrative texts. The distinction between legal and administrative texts has caused particular trouble and deserves some explanation: we call "legal" texts those which list witnesses to the transaction described in the text, whereas "administrative" texts usually do not list witnesses. In other words, legal texts are legal instruments whereas administrative texts are not legal documents per se; they can be compared with what we would term, in a modern administrative context, ledgers, tags, receipts, book-keeping records, etc. This ideal distinction, however, in many cases does not correspond to the textual evidence. As

we become more and more aware, many legal documents which seem to be simply private legal documents actually reflect administrative transactions or operations undertaken by or in the name of the temple or palace (for an introduction to the problems see P. Koschaker, *HG* 6 [1923], pp. 155f.). For seal impressions found on letters see E. Sollberger, *TCS* 1 (1966), p. 5, and J. Renger, *OLZ* 68 (1973), col. 133; for administrative texts see W. F. Leemans quoted in footnote 3.

An exceptional seal impression on a literary text from Nippur was reported at the symposium by M. Civil: 3 NT 152 (Gilgamesh and the Bull of Heaven).

3. Lack of previous investigations of sealing practices with regard to administrative texts makes it prudent to exclude them from the present discussion. However, I should point out the urgent need for such an investigation. So far only a note by W. F. Leemans, *JESHO* 7 (1964), p. 214, and A. Goetze, *JCS* 4 (1950), pp. 87 and 113-17, deal with the problem.
4. General surveys and introductions on the nature and significance of Mesopotamian legal documents can be found in: R. Haase, *Einführung*, pp. 9-15; V. Korošec, *Keilschriftrecht*, pp. 50-53; P. Koschaker, *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* 9, pp. 211-19; M. San Nicolò, *Beiträge*, pp. 114-74; M. San Nicolò, *Die Schlussklauseln der altbabylonischen Kauf- und Tauschverträge*, pp. 126-37, and 189-91; M. Schorr, *VAB* 5, pp. xiii-xlix.
5. M. San Nicolò, *Beiträge*, p. 133.
6. See D. O. Edzard, *ZA* 60 (1969), pp. 8-53.
7. See CAD s.v. *kirbānu* (for a new ref. see K. R. Veenhof, *Symbolae Böhl* 360:16); for other symbolic acts performed in connection with or as part of a legal transaction see A. D. Kilmer, *JAOS* 94 (1974), pp. 177-83, especially n. 24, H. Petschow, *RLA* 3 (1957-71), pp. 318-22 s.v. *Gewandsaum*, and for their legal significance see also J. Renger, *WO* 8 (1976), p. 229.
8. See CAD s.v. *nīšu* "oath"; G. R. Driver and J. C. Miles, *Babylonian Laws* 1 (1956), index p. 509 s.v. "oath"; D. O. Edzard, *AS* 20 (1976), pp. 63-98; Falkenstein, *Gerichtsurkunden* 1 (1956), pp. 63-72; M. San Nicolò, *RLA* 2 (1938), pp. 305-15 s.v. "Eid."
9. R. Haase, *Einführung*, p. 10; M. San Nicolò, *Beiträge*, pp. 124-26. The word for a legal document with an envelope is in Old Assyrian *ṭuppum harmum* (see *AHW* s.v., also CAD s.v. *armu*), in Old Babylonian it is *ermum* (see CAD s.v. *ermu* mng. la, and also J. Renger, *JNES* 27 [1968], p. 136 n. 2) and possibly *panum* (see *JNES* 27 [1968], pp. 136-40).
10. M. San Nicolò, *Beiträge*, pp. 127ff., and 164.
11. See, for instance *RA* 9 (1912), p. 22 (= M. Schorr, *VAB* 5 no. 317); also J. Renger, *JNES* 27 (1968), p. 136, n. 2.
12. *TLB* 4 82 (= R. Frankena, *AbB* 3 no. 82), cf. J. Renger, *JNES* 27 (1968), p. 136f.
13. See in detail J. G. Lautner, *Streitbeendigung*, p. 32f.
14. M. San Nicolò, *Beiträge*, p. 162.
15. For detailed arguments, see M. San Nicolò, *Beiträge*, pp. 163f., M. San Nicolò, *Schlussklauseln*, p. 126f. But it is important to keep in mind that the origin of the legal document in Mesopotamia was that of an instrument of evidence. Convincing arguments can be found in J. Krecher's article in *ZA* 63 (1974), pp. 171f. There he points out that Old Sumerian legal documents are merely a kind of archival records to aid one's memory when needed. These texts simply list the essential facts without employing finite verbal forms. It is therefore not surprising that these texts were not sealed, a custom which only commenced in the Ur III period, see P. Steinkeller's article in this volume.
16. *CH* § 9f. For a discussion of these sections see P. Koschaker, *Rechtsvergleichende Studien zur Gesetzgebung Hammurapis* (1917), pp. 85-100. M. San Nicolò, *Schlussklauseln*, pp. 128-34 points out a number of cases where it is said that sales documents concerning previous sales of a property would

be handed over to a buyer in order to facilitate the proving of his ownership in case the property was contested or claimed. It seems, however, that these cases cannot be construed as a general rule making written contracts a mandatory condition for a valid sales transaction. This can be adduced from the fact that we know of records concerning court litigations where the evidence of a written contract is considered inferior to the evidence provided by witnesses (see in detail J. G. Lautner, *Streitbeendigung*, pp. 32f.). Note in this context also the constitutive force of symbolic acts performed by the parties to an agreement in the presence of witnesses, for which see n. 7 above.

17. Also, a number of publications do not mention—sometimes for reasons not to be accounted for by the copyist—whether the copy represents the tablet or the envelope, or whether or not an envelope to a given tablet exists. The use of envelopes becomes more and more uncommon during the second half of the second millennium B.C. and the first half of the first millennium B.C.; it ceases completely afterwards (see M. San Nicolò, *Beiträge*, pp. 126ff.).
18. R. Haase, *Einführung*, p. 11; M. San Nicolò, *Beiträge*, p. 136; a representative list of persons whose seals were impressed on Old Babylonian legal documents can be found in M. Schorr, *VAB* 5, pp. xlili-xlv.
19. For details see the contribution of R. Whiting in this volume.
20. See, e.g., *BE* 6/1 pl. XI no. 16; also a number of the texts from Sippar published in the *CT* series are sealed this way, see, e.g., *CT* 8 19b and 19c (both are tablets), 23c (envelope).
21. Numerous examples can be found in the Sippar texts, see, for instance, *CT* 2 17, 21, *CT* 4 12b, *CT* 8 21a, 27a. The notation is either  $NA_4$ .KIŠIB PN, KIŠIB PN, or simply PN beside the seal impression.  
 With the kind permission of the former Keeper of the Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities, The British Museum, Dr. R. D. Barnett, and of the present Keeper, Dr. E. Sollberger, I have recorded all the sealings on the Old Babylonian Sippar texts published in *CT* 2, 4, 6, 8, 29, 33 and in *AJSL* 29. I hope to present the results in a separate study.  
 For examples from Nippur see, for example, *BE* 6/2 14, 22, *PBS* 8/1 81. Examples from Nippur should not be too numerous because of the custom of using so-called burgul seals, for which see n. 27 below.
22. I am not aware of any such by-scripts in texts from southern Babylonia; for the texts from Eshnunna (twentieth century B.C.) R. Whiting informs me that he knows of no such examples on legal documents. I know of only one text with by-scripts to seal impressions among the texts from Nērebtum (Ishchali) (A 7634, according to the forthcoming edition by S. Greengus, a copy of which he kindly put at my disposal); in addition an unpublished tablet from the Diyala region (A 11839, which was transliterated by H. Farber) bears such a by-script. Both texts are from the late nineteenth century B.C.
23. *kišib lú-inim-ma-bi-meš ib-ra(aš)*, see, for example, *YOS* 8 145, 152, 156 and *passim* in that volume containing texts from Larsa; usually the formula appears in the abbreviated form *kišib lú-inim-ma-bi-meš*; see, for example, *YOS* 8 136, 142, 144, 148, etc.; the same abbreviated form is found in texts from Ur, see, for example, *UET* 5 125, 132, 140, 143. Note that the fuller form with *ib-ra* was not used in Ur. For less frequent examples from Nippur see *CAD* s.v. *barāmu* mng. *la-l'*.
24. See, for instance, *YOS* 8 36, 78, 84 and *passim* in that volume.
25. The formula is *kišib-a-ni ib-ra*, see for instance, *YOS* 8 54, 61, 106, 127, etc. As far as I am aware this practice of explicitly indicating the fact that a party sealed the document is generally not attested in the documents from Ur (for an exception see note 26). Note especially in  $NA_4$ .KIŠIB *Bal-mu-nam-hé barim* “sealed with the seal of B.” (*YOS* 8 71). This phrase indicates that Balmunamhe, a party to the agreement, was not personally present when the agreement was concluded
26. See *Riftin* 22 (from Ur). As a rare exception note a text from northern Babylonia in Scheil Sippar no. 10 r. 31-33; *mimma šībī annûtim ina kunukkātišunu ibrumu u anāku kunuk šartim ušabrim* “all this these witnesses have sealed with their(own) seals and have had it sealed with a . . . seal.”

27. See in general A. Poebel, *OLZ* 10 (1907), cols. 175-81, *BE* 6/2 (1909), p. 51f., and further A. Walther, *LSS* 6/4-6, p. 179, M. San Nicolò, *Schlussklauseln*, p. 23, and F. R. Kraus, *JCS* 3 (1951), p. 98.
28. For an extant burgul seal see *AS* 17 (1969), p. 7 no. 13.
29. *Passim* in texts from Nippur; for prosopographic information see the indexes of *BE* 6/2, *PBS* 8/1, and Çiğ-Kizilyay-Kraus, *Nippur s.v. Awīlja, Iddin<sup>d</sup> Išum (Iddiš(š)um)*, and *Nergalmanšum*, to name only the most frequently mentioned seal cutters.
30. A bur-gul acting as witness is attested in *TCL* 10 67, *VAS* 13 68, 75, 76, 81, 82 (all from Larsa), *UET* 5 122, 422 (from Ur), C. Jean, *Tell Sifr*, 94 (from Kutalla). For impressions of burgul seals see, e.g., *UET* 5 96, 97, 106, 112, and *passim* in that volume, and also *UE* 10 no. 451 (all from Ur); for clear examples of impressions of burgul seals from Larsa see *YOS* 8 133 and 138. Among the texts from Isin a bur-gul occurs as witness in three instances: *BIN* 7 168, 174, 187, and impressions of burgul seals can be found on the texts *BIN* 7 59, 60, 62-68, 70, 168, 169, 213, 215 (see already F. R. Kraus, *JCS* 3 [1951], p. 98).
31. In L. Speleers, *Recueil*, no. 251, a text from Marad, a bur-gul appears as the first witness. Two texts of the time of Abdi-erah, contemporary with Sumulael of Babylon (1880-1845 B.C.) which probably come from Kish bear the impressions of burgul seals, see S. D. Simmons, *JCS* 15 (1961), p. 52f. nos. 119 and 120 (for provenience and date see S. D. Simmons, *JCS* 14 [1960], pp. 76 and 78). The text *JCS* 15 (1961), p. 53 no. 122, also bearing the impression of a burgul seal, is prosopographically related to the texts published by M. Rutten, *RA* 52 (1958), pp. 208ff., 53 (1959), pp. 77ff., 54 (1960), pp. 19ff. and 147ff. A great number of these texts bear—as far as I can determine—the impressions of burgul seals of the party relinquishing a right or assuming an obligation.
32. See n. 21 above. E. Sollberger remarks with regard to two of the three seal impressions found on *CT* 47 46 (*Hamm.* 39) “[Seals] 1 and 2 seem to be of the burgul type, they are repeated all over the tablet.” If they are in fact impressions of burgul seals we would be dealing with a situation which is unusual for two reasons: first, burgul seals are rare for this period in northern Babylonia, and secondly, as far as I know, burgul seals were exclusively used by the party relinquishing a right or assuming an obligation, but not by witnesses. It might be of significance for further investigations that, as far as I know, the word *parkullu* (*parkullu*) is barely attested for northern Babylonia: see E. Szlechter, *Tablettes*, *MAH* 15.951:20 (as a witness among other craftsmen, e.g., smiths) and *AbB* 2 87:28 (on the basis of *ABIM* 20:77, see *AHw.* s.v. *parkullum*). The references from northern Babylonia cited in n. 31 are all dated to the nineteenth and the early eighteenth centuries B.C.
33. The Akkadian term is *sissiktu*, see *AHw.* s.v.; see further M. San Nicolò, *Beiträge*, pp. 140f., H. Petschow, *RLA* 3 (1957-71), pp. 318-22, s.v. “Gewandsaum,” and M. Schorr, *VAB* 5, pp. xl-xli.
34. E. Stone and P. Zimansky, *Old Babylonian Contracts from Nippur I, Selected Texts from the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, Microfiche Archives 1* (Chicago, 1976), no. 35.
35. *VAS* 8 18, 9 83, *TCL* 1 76. *VAS* 8 9:8f. (a court settlement [ṭuppu la ragāmim]) mentions the fact that a party to a previous agreement impressed his *sissiktum* on a tablet.
36. *kunuk PN*, see, e.g., *VAS* 8 94, 100, 107, *TCL* 1 76, 79.
37. The Akkadian term is *šuprum*, see *CAD*, *AHw.* s.v.; see further M. San Nicolò, *Beiträge*, pp. 140f., M. Schorr, *VAB* 5, p. xli. Usually three fingernail marks are impressed side by side serving as a person’s seal substitute. They are accompanied by a by-script of the type (NA<sub>4</sub>).KIŠIB PN, see, e.g., *VAS* 7 115.
38. *VAS* 7 68 (tenant of field), 92 (owner of house in rental contract), 104, 105, 122 (debtor), 115 (as an exception the first witness in an administrative text [receipt]; see above n. 2).
39. See the remark to *UET* 5 222, an administrative document of the time of Sumuel of Larsa (1894-1866 B.C.).

40. See E. Salonen, *Glossar zu den altbabylonischen Urkunden aus Susa* (= *Studia Orientalia* 36 [1967]), p. 80. The notation accompanying the fingernail mark of the party who was required to seal reads in some instances *šupuršu/ša* “his/her fingernail mark”; but *šupur PN* “fingernail mark of PN” can be found on practically every legal document from Susa, see MDP 22-24. Scheil’s copies do not always show the fingernail marks which in most cases consist of two crosswise impressed fingernail marks, see, e.g., MDP 22 105, 126, 127, 23 172, 190, 199, 220, 24 339, 369; note the fingernail marks of several debtors, in MDP 23 181, and the fingernail marks were applied parallel to each other and not crosswise, in MDP 23 205.
41. 3 NT 223 (unpublished, courtesy E. Stone).
42. See, e.g., CT 8 16a where the witness *Šin-rēmēnī* (1. 45) has sealed the envelope with a seal inscribed as follows: *Šilli-abija* [DUMU] *†xl-<sup>d</sup>UTU ARAD <sup>d</sup>[x x]*, and which is identified as his seal through the by-script *KIŠIB Šin-rēmēnī*; in CT 2 8 a seal with the inscription [B]i-li-li DUMU <sup>d</sup>Na-bi-um-[x-x] ARAD <sup>d</sup>EN.[ZU] is identified through the by-script as the seal of *Šin-ēribam*; in CT 4 30d a number of hardly legible seal impressions can be recognized, but the traces do not fit the names of the two witnesses or the party in a single instance (all the seal inscriptions show clearly a DINGIR-sign as part of the name of the bearer). In other instances one finds seal impressions without by-script which cannot be related to any of the persons mentioned in the document, e.g., the envelope of CT 6 7b (not copied by Pinches) has on the upper left side of the reverse a seal impression with the inscription *Puzur(KA.ŠA)-<sup>d</sup>[x x]* DUMU *l-[x x]* ARAD <sup>d</sup>Adad which cannot be related to any of the persons mentioned in the document; the same is the case for the seals of <sup>d</sup>NIN.ŠUBUR-ba-ni [DUMU] *Bur-nu-nu ARAD É.UD.UD* and of *Tu-[tu-ni(?)]-šu* DUMU <sup>d</sup>ŠEŠ.KI.MA.AN.SUM ARAD *Sà-bi-um* on the envelope of CT 6 47a, and for the seal of *NIN.ME.[x]* [DUMU *x (x)*] <sup>d</sup>[*x (x)*] on the case of CT 8 17b, and for the seal with the inscription <sup>d</sup>Nin-pirig *sukkal-gal <sup>d</sup>Utu níg é-babbar-ra-a-šè* in CT 48 15 (see also J. J. Finkelstein, *RA* 67 [1974], p. 115), and compare CT 47 58 seal no. 8.
43. Cf. also the general statement to this effect by M. San Nicolò, *Beiträge*, p. 140. For the use of someone else’s seal in the Middle Babylonian Period see below p. 77 with n. 53.
44. For the *nadītum* see J. Renger, *ZA* 58 (1967), pp. 149-76 with previous literature, and R. Harris, *Ancient Sippar* (1975), pp. 302-31.
45. Seals of women are rare. CT 47, a volume of documents related to the activities of the *nadītu*’s of *Šamaš* in Sippar, provides only nine examples of seals owned by women (see nos. 7, 11, 40, 42, 56, 75). From other publications I can cite a few more examples (not systematically collected), e.g., CT 6 48b (seal of *Bēlatum*, daughter of *Apil-[ . . . ]*), CT 8 46 (seal of *Bēlessunu*, daughter of *Ilumrabi*), CT 48 59 seal no. 5. Among the more than five hundred texts published in *YOS* 13 I could not find a single seal impression identified as that of a woman. One may even ask whether the *nadītu*’s who are listed in most of the documents concerning the transactions of another *nadītum* regularly sealed, if not with their own, then at least with another person’s seal. The fact is that in CT 47 (mentioned above in this note) in only two cases a by-script identifies a seal as that used by the *nadītum* *Narāmtum* (nos. 11a and 42a). Note further CT 8 46, where by-scripts identify the impressions of the seals used by the *nadītu*’s *Elierēssa* (line 47), *Aja-kuzub-mātim* (line 51) and *Muhaddītum* (line 52), respectively, and CT 4 49b (envelope), where a seal impression showing a figurative representation is accompanied by the by-script *KIŠIB <sup>d</sup>A-a-tal-lik*. According to M. San Nicolò, *Beiträge*, pp. 134ff., women did not function as witnesses, a statement which has to be modified insofar as the *nadītu* texts, mainly from Sippar and Nippur, list women as witnesses. The fact, however, that there is so little quantitative evidence for their sealing as witnesses leads us to the conclusion that their witnessing was secondary to that of the officials of the *gagūm*, the collective residence of the *nadītu*’s, who are also listed as witnesses in these documents. In this context one may have to consider seal impressions with the inscription <sup>d</sup>Šamaš <sup>d</sup>Aja—often impressed several times—occurring frequently on Old Babylonian legal documents. This and the other questions raised in this note I hope to answer in more detail in my study on the Old Babylonian seal impressions from Sippar (see n. 21 above).

46. See, e.g., UET 7 26 (NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB PN), 48, 69 (from Ur), O. Gurney, *Iraq* 11 (1949), p. 143 no. 3 (from Dūr-Kurigalzu), H. Petschow, *Mittelbabylonische Rechts- und Wirtschaftsurkunden der Hilprecht-Sammlung Jena* (= *Abhandl. der Sächs. Akad. d. Wissenschaften, Phil.-Hist. Klasse* vol. 64/4, 1974), nos. 7, 10, 13 and *passim* in that volume (from Nippur); both publications carefully note the traces of seal impressions visible on the tablets. For examples of sealed administrative texts see *ibid.*, p. 80 to no. 31.
47. See, e.g., KIŠIB PN in BE 14 1, 2, 15 and *passim* in that volume.
48. See H. Petschow, *Mittelbabylonische Rechts- und Wirtschaftsurkunden*, no. 5, UET 7 37.
49. See, e.g., H. Petschow, *ibid.*, no. 1 (NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB PN NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB LÚ.INIM.INIM.MA ÍB.RA.AŠ), no. 2 (NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB PN NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB LÚ.INIM.INIM.MA.E.NE)—but according to H. Petschow in both cases there are no traces of seal impressions on the tablet).
50. *sissiktašu kīma kunukkišu* BE 15 55, or *sissikti* (TÚG.SÍG) PN BE 14 86 (both texts from Nippur); thus far I am not aware of any notation or an impression of a hem of a garment on texts from Ur or Dūr-Kurigalzu. For an occurrence of such an impression see BE 14 pl. XIII nos. 35-37.
51. *šupur* PN *kīma kunukkišu*, see, e.g., H. Petschow, *Mittelbabylonische Rechts- und Wirtschaftsurkunden* nos. 1, 3, 5 and *passim* in that volume, see further UET 7, 3, 8, 10 and *passim* in that volume; for an abbreviated version (*šupur* PN) see UET 7 25 and *Iraq* 11 (1949), p. 143, no. 1.
52. PBS 2/2 51, BE 14 11, 128a, UET 7 3, 22, 30, 37, and see H. Petschow, *Mittelbabylonische Rechts- und Wirtschaftsurkunden*, p. 18. But there are also examples where less than five fingernail marks were impressed by the person obligated to seal, see, e.g., UET 7 31 (two sets of three fingernail marks each, for two persons), 37 (two sets of three fingernail marks referring to the two persons mentioned in lines 11f.), *Iraq* 11 (1949), p. 143 no. 1 (four and three fingernail marks, respectively, referring to two persons), BE 14 41 (three fingernail marks), 49 (seven “fingernail” marks, i.e., the marks were incised with a pointed instrument, perhaps the stylus of the scribe).
53. *ina* NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB *ma-am-na-na-ma kanik* UET 7 29; see further *kīma* NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB-šú *ina* NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB PN *š̄ibi barim* “instead of his own seal, it is sealed with the seal of PN, the witness” PBS 8/2 159.
54. The text publications do not expressly indicate whether the copy represents the tablet or the envelope. A cursory check of the Nuzi tablets in the Oriental Institute Museum, however, produced only one tablet with an envelope: A 11878B (= JEN 321); seal impressions with by-scripts are distributed all over the surface. The obverse of the envelope has a docket (see also n. 55). On the other hand, I should mention as an exception JEN 566 (a sale-adoption), where the preserved tablet does not bear any seal impression.  
A thorough study of the sealing practice of Nuzi tablets on the basis of the originals is very desirable. Such a study has to take into account the possible relation of the witnesses to the parties involved, the type of documents sealed, and, in the case of the protocols, the legal matter dealt with. The remarks in the following notes may therefore be subject to later revisions.
55. The copies in JEN vol. 6 and HSS 19 give a fair example of the arrangement of seal impressions and by-scripts at the end of the text and if necessary on the edges. Earlier volumes in the JEN and HSS series do not contain exact copies of the tablets—at least as far as the by-scripts to the seal impressions are concerned. The by-script is either NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB PN (see, e.g., JEN 579, 580 and *passim* in the texts from Nuzi) or less frequently NA<sub>4</sub> PN (see, e.g., JEN 635).  
A selective sampling shows that in several instances not all witnesses sealed the tablets. It is possible, however, that seals of all witnesses were impressed on the envelopes. Most seal impressions show figural representations, and only a few have an inscription. The inscription usually does not have the name of the person who actually used the seal, identified through the by-script (see, e.g., JEN 578).  
According to the by-scripts to the seal impressions on the tablets the scribe who wrote the tablet acted as witness and sealed in quite a number of cases (see, e.g., JEN 1, 2, 3, 4 and *passim* in that volume), but not always (see, e.g., JEN 5, 7, 14).



Sealing by the party or parties involved in a legal transaction: One can state that in general the documents concerning sale adoptions were not sealed by the parties involved; for an exception see, e.g., ZA 48 (1944), p. 183 no. 3, and HSS 5 62 (cf. the by-script NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB mŠu-ru-uk-ka-a with the name of one of the adoptors in line 3); in HSS 5 56 the seal of the adoptor appears on the envelope identified by a by-script, which is part of the docket briefly describing the content of the tablet. The fact that in another instance of a sale-adoption the scribe's seal is impressed under the docket on the envelope indicates that there probably were no stringent formal requirements in Nuzi with regard to who had to seal a document. In other instances we find occasionally the seals of a party impressed on a tablet (see, e.g., HSS 5 13 [a protocol], but note that the docket on the envelope is followed by the seal impression of the scribe who also sealed the tablet). For instances of lišānu-protocols where the party making a statement did not seal, as is usual in this type of document, see, e.g., JEN 106, 109 and passim.

56. JEN 215.
57. The Akkadian word is qannu; see also the discussion in P. Koschaker, NRUA, p. 20, and CAD s.v. mašāru mng. 3 for additional references.
58. For Middle Assyrian seals in general see T. Beran, ZA 52 (1957), pp. 141-215. He publishes and discusses in detail a large number of the seal impressions found on the tablets from Assur (published in KAJ). Almost all the impressions show only figural representations hence their identification through by-scripts. For a prosopographic investigation on the basis of the seal impressions see H. J. Nissen, Festschrift Falkenstein, pp. 109-20.
59. See, e.g., KAJ 2, 4, 7 and passim in this volume (from Assur; in general the by-script reads KIŠIB PN, rarely NA<sub>4</sub> PN for which see, e.g., KAJ 33, 85), JCS 7 (1953), p. 149 no. 3, p. 150 no. 5 (from Tell Billa; the by-script always reads KIŠIB PN) and Iraq 30 (1968), pl. 63 TR 3021 and passim in this article (from Tell al-Rimah; the by-script reads in general KIŠIB PN, rarely NA<sub>4</sub> PN). The text publications of Middle Assyrian texts do not—as far as I am aware—mention the existence of tablets with envelopes. We must assume therefore that the seals were impressed on the tablets themselves.
60. For the arrangement of the seal impressions of the witnesses on the tablet see, e.g., KAJ 2 and Iraq 30 (1968), pl. 63 TR 3021. The available publications suggest that not all witnesses sealed the tablet. Other tablets—according to their published hand copies—were apparently not sealed at all by the witnesses, see, e.g., Iraq 30 (1968), pl. 63 TR 3022, KAJ 28, 29, etc. Many Middle Assyrian legal documents are sealed by the scribe, his seal impression identified through the by-script KIŠIB DUB.SAR, see, e.g., KAJ 31, 39, Iraq 30 (1968), pl. 57 TR 3001, 3002 (cf. KIŠIB Marduk-šar-ilāni for which see l. 17), pl. 59 TR 3007, etc.
61. Envelopes are in use during this period, but only in small numbers, see M. San Nicolò, Beiträge, pp. 126ff.
62. NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB PN EN LÚ SUM-ni ADD 198; for other examples see the texts published by C. H. W. Johns in ADD (transliterated and translated by A. Ungnad in J. Kohler-A. Ungnad, Assyrische Rechtsurkunden [1913]), J. N. Postgate, The Governor's Palace Archive (1973), and by B. Parker, "The Nimrud Tablets 1952—Business Documents," Iraq 16 (1954), pp. 29-58; for photographs of tablets with seal impressions see B. Parker, Iraq 24 (1962), pls. 19-22, and in J. N. Postgate, The Governor's Palace Archive.
63. kum NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB-šú šupuršu iškun, see, e.g., J. N. Postgate, Governor's Palace Archive, no. 31; see similar expressions in this volume and in the publications quoted in n. 62. The number and direction in which the fingernail marks were impressed vary considerably from tablet to tablet, see, e.g., J. N. Postgate, The Governor's Palace Archive, nos. 3, 6, 9, 17, 20, 22, 24.
64. See M. E. L. Mallowan, Iraq 12 (1950), p. 173. The use of the determinative for wooden instruments or objects, GIŠ, in front of the logogram for fingernail mark, UMBIN, points in the same direction; for refs. see CAD s.v. šupru A.



65. ina unqi šarrūtija aknuk . . . ana PN addin ADD 646:24, 647:24; for other examples of the use of the seal ring see J. N. Postgate, *The Governor's Palace Archive*, pl. 95, and B. Parker, *Iraq 24* (1962), pls. 20-22.
66. See M. San Nicolò, *Beiträge*, p. 138f., also B. Parker, *Iraq 16* (1954), p. 42 ND 2324, ND 2325; this fee was paid to the party ceding a right or assuming an obligation.
67. See V. Korošec, *Keilschriftrecht*, p. 191 with references.
68. M. San Nicolò, *Beiträge*, pp. 127, 164ff.
69. See, e.g., TuM 2-3 12:20, VAS 5 21:34, see also A. Ungnad, *Glossar*, p. 72 s.v. kanāku mng. 4. To judge from the copies published it seems as if witnesses did not always seal a document in the Neo-Babylonian period. A rare exception is BE 8/1 107 (see the photograph on pl. VI) from Nippur, dated to the sixth year of Darius I: the tablet shows several seal impressions with by-scripts. But I doubt that the several sets of nail marks (without by-script) on the tablets BE 8/1 1, 2, 3 were impressed by the witnesses because seal substitutes usually are used only by the party or parties required to seal. Note, finally, that in the Seleucid period witnesses regularly seal the tablets, see n. 76.
70. VAS 4 195:19 (unqu PN as an identifying by-script), for other examples see, e.g., BE 8/1, pl. VI.
71. šupru PN u PN-2 nādinē eqli kīma kunukkišunu 5R 67 no. 1 r. 31; see further the remarks in n. 69.
72. CAD s.v. šupru A mng. 2a-4'.
73. The copies in Strassmaier's corpus and those in VAS 3-6 do not provide sufficient information on seal impressions or fingernail marks.
74. See, e.g., BIN 1 127, 130; for other instances see H. Hunger, *Bagh. Mitt.* 5 (1970), p. 199 no. 1:40 (GIŠ šupur PN kīma IM.KIŠIB-šú tuddātu "the fingernail mark of PN is identified as his seal (impression)"), and passim in this group of texts, see *ibid.*, p. 250 s.v. kunukku. During the Neo-Babylonian period fingernail marks were usually impressed in sets of threes.
75. Good examples in photographs are provided in BRM 2 pl. II, and in J. Oelsner, *WZJ 19* (1970), p. 908.
76. unqa PN, see, e.g., J. Oelsner, *WZJ 19* (1970), pp. 906f., BRM 2 1, 2, and passim in texts in this volume (all from Uruk); for examples from texts from northern Babylonia, mainly Babylon, see CT 49 1, 2 and passim in that volume. The texts from the Seleucid period regularly have by-scripts to the seal impressions. On the basis of these by-scripts one can say that usually most or even all witnesses actually sealed the document, see, e.g., J. Oelsner, *WZJ 19*, pp. 906f., BRM 2 19, 20 and passim in that volume.
77. See, e.g., BRM 2 1 left edge. Whether sealed with the seal ring or—as a substitute—with a fingernail mark, the seal impression of the party obligated to seal is identified through a by-script (unqa PN LÚ nādin isqi šuāti "seal ring of PN, the seller of this prebend," see, e.g., BRM 2 22, 37 and passim in that volume).
78. See M. Rostovzeff, *Seleucid Babylonia—Bullae and Seals of Clay with Greek Inscriptions* (Yale Classical Studies 3 [1932]), pl. I no. 2, II no. 2, X no. 1, also E. Kittel, *Siegel*, p. 76 fig. 50.
79. See Rostovzeff, *Seleucid Babylonia*, p. 22.
80. See *ibid.*, p. 18, where he quotes a chemical analysis of the carbonized and decayed material found inside the central "tube" of the bullae.
81. See *ibid.*, pp. 23ff. for a detailed discussion of the bullae and their "Sitz im Leben."
82. See M. San Nicolò, *Beiträge*, p. 135.
83. See *ibid.*, p. 138.
84. See *ibid.*, pp. 134ff.
85. See, e.g., PBS 7 90 OB); for further references see CAD s.v. kunukku mng. 1c.

86. Note PBS 8/1 8 (exchange of orchard, time of Enlilbani) where the sealing of the tablet by the parties as well as their oath specifically refer to the vindication-clause; see P. Koschaker, HG 6 for further discussion.
87. See n. 55 above, and also HSS 5 55.
88. See M. San Nicolò, *Beiträge*, pp. 141f.
89. See n. 60 above.
90. See M. San Nicolò, *Beiträge*, p. 137.
91. See *ibid.*, p. 136.

## Seal Use in the Old Assyrian Period\*

by

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This presentation will be of a philological nature, concentrated on the questions of how and when the Old Assyrians used their seals. From the point of view of history, archaeology, or art history, the available material from this period is in some respects unique and presents us with a number of features which are not usually found in the evidence from one single period. The main reason for this is the fact that our material stems from a social context which is unusual. Practically all of our textual documentation, and all of the sealings on tablets and tags, stem from the Assyrian trading colonies in Anatolia, and overwhelmingly from the colony at Kanesh, a capital city of an Anatolian kingdom which was located some 30 kms from present-day Kayseri. The Assyrian trading colonies represent a peculiar milieu where people with different cultural backgrounds met. The basis for the colonies was of course economic, but the contacts established between the various population groups can be seen to have been quite varied and close; indeed, marriages between individuals from the different groups were not infrequent, and such unions must have entailed some fusion between the different cultural, linguistic, and social traditions.<sup>1</sup> The use of cylinder seals was one of the quite distinctive features of the Old Assyrian traditions, however, and it is interesting to note that only the presence of clay tablets and cylinder seals in the ruins of the Assyrian houses in the Kanesh colony distinguish them from ordinary Anatolian houses of the same period.

The cosmopolitan nature of the society of these trading colonies explains the diversity of styles in the glyptic art, where four main groups have been isolated: 1) the Old Babylonian style (fig. 1), represented by seals which were most probably produced in and imported from southern Mesopotamia;<sup>2</sup> 2) the Old Assyrian style (figs. 2-3) which may be defined as a kind of local adaptation of the OB style, and which is supposed to have originated in Assur;<sup>3</sup> 3) the Anatolian styles (figs. 4-9), subdivided into several groups which show varying degrees of dependence on Mesopotamian patterns;<sup>4</sup> 4) the Syrian style (fig. 10), which is supposed to be at home in the Syrian area.<sup>5</sup> Obviously, these different styles and their interrelations offer exciting material for study, and especially Edith Porada and Nimet Özgüç have made valuable contributions in a series of studies.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, there have been few attempts to combine the study of the seals with the evidence of the texts, so that such a relatively simple project as attempting to relate the seals of the various styles to their owners in order to establish whether any firm pattern existed, has not been undertaken by anyone.<sup>7</sup>

The mother city for all the colonies was of course the city of Assur on the Tigris, but from there we have very little material from the Old Assyrian period. The excavations carried out in the beginning of this century gave us no more than a handful of seals, mostly found in graves; an impression of the royal seal of Erišum I on a potsherd (fig. 11) was discovered in the ruins of the so-called "Old Palace."<sup>8</sup> A seal which is probably also from this period was rolled on the tablets which contained the vassal treaties of the Neo-Assyrian king Esarhaddon (fig. 12); it was the seal of the god Aššur which must have been kept as a sacred object for more than a thousand years.<sup>9</sup> There is no other directly relevant material from the ruins of Assur, but it should be kept in mind that a very large number of the letters which have been discovered at Kanesh in Anatolia originated in the capital. Some of these letters still have their envelopes with sealings

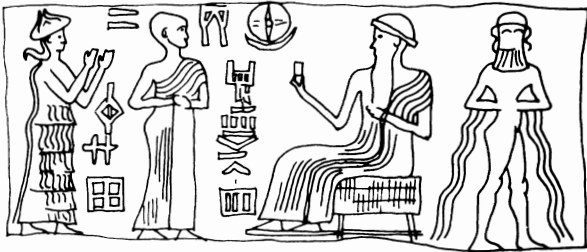


Figure 1. Seal in the Old Babylonian style.  
From an unpublished tablet.



Figure 2. Seal in the Old Assyrian style. From ICK 1 11a, seal A.

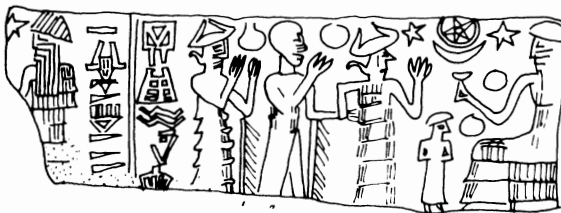


Figure 3. Seal in the Old Assyrian style.  
From an unpublished tablet.



Figure 4. Seal in the Anatolian style.  
From ICK 1 35a, seal D.

Figure 5. Seal in the Anatolian style.  
From ICK 1 46a, seal A.

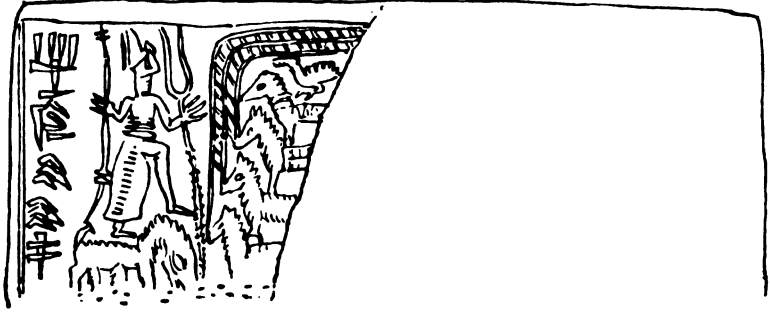


Figure 6. Seal in the Anatolian style.  
From ICK 1 35a, seal C.



Figure 7. Seal in the Anatolian style.  
From ICK 1 41a, seal C.



Figure 8. Seal in the Anatolian style.  
From ICK 1 45a, seal A.





Figure 9. Seal in the Anatolian style.  
From an unpublished tablet.

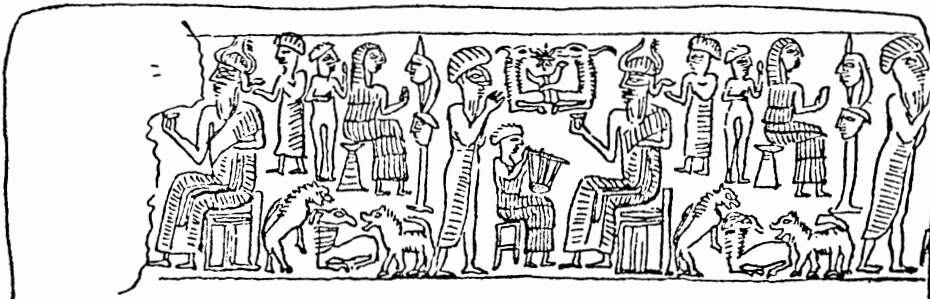


Figure 10.  
Seal in the "Syrianizing" style.  
From ICK 1 42a, seal A.



Figure 11. Seal of Erisum I.  
From WVDOG 66, p. 10, fig. 1.

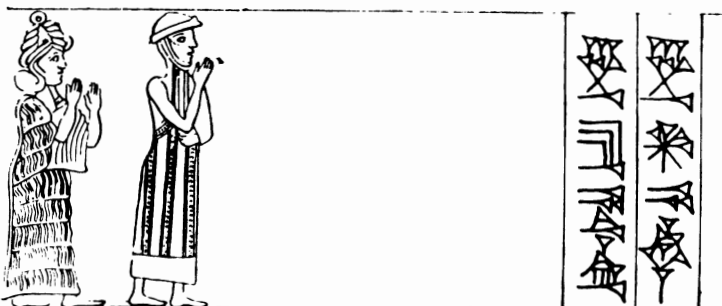


Figure 12. Seal impression on the text  
of the vassal treaties of Esarhaddon.  
From Wiseman, *Treaties*, p. 18, fig. 4.  
Courtesy of the British School of  
Archaeology in Iraq.

preserved, and these constitute a small group which can be said with certainty to stem from Assur. Just as we must keep these texts in a special group for linguistic analysis—since for one thing they cannot contain evidence of influence from the Anatolian languages—so must we treat the seals separately from the seals which were clearly used by people who lived in Anatolia. I am aware that it is quite possible that seals could be transported from one place to another, and that Anatolian influences in other ways could make themselves felt in such seals, but it is obviously methodologically unsound to ignore the distinction. The very few known references to sale and export of seals concern specimens which were sent from Assur to Anatolia, rather than the other way.<sup>10</sup>

To this distinction in terms of distance we must add one of time, for it is well established that the material from Anatolia falls into two major groups which stem from distinct periods separated by some 50 to 60 years. These periods are in Kanesh represented by material found in two archaeological levels, called Level 2 and Level 1b, the latter being later. Practically all of the published texts come from the time of Level 2 which was the period marked by the main Assyrian expansion; the sealings found on the texts from Level 1b were published by Nimet Özgüç in 1968.<sup>11</sup> Since the delay in the publication of the thousands of texts from both periods which have been discovered by Turkish archaeologists still prevents us from making use of this material, I shall have to base my remarks here on the texts in the various museums in Europe and USA.

Even though nearly all the Old Assyrian texts in these museums have by now been published, we still suffer from the regrettable practice of some of the Assyriologists who published these collections to ignore the fact that many of the tablets which they copied also carried sealings. For quite a number of early publications we still do not have the sealings published (for instance the five volumes of texts from the British museum),<sup>12</sup> and in other cases only photographs of selected seal impressions were presented (for instance the two volumes of texts from Yale).<sup>13</sup> This is, of course, a reflection of the tendency to isolate the study of the seals from the study of the texts, and it is interesting to note that even in J. Lewy's admirable edition of texts in the Louvre, TC 3, containing both texts and seal impressions, no attempt was made to combine the sealings with the tablets. In fact, one has to go through two different indexes in order to establish in each individual case on which tablet a sealing was found. So, whereas for some of the older publications of texts we do have the tablets but lack the sealings, the opposite is true for a large number of the unpublished texts from Ankara, for the publications of Nimet Özgüç provide us with photographs of a great number of sealings, but the texts connected with them remain inaccessible.

### The Nature of the Material

Hundreds of Old Assyrian seals appear to exist in collections around the world. Some seals were also found in the excavations at Kanesh, but in general the inhabitants of the burnt houses must have taken their seals with them—perhaps because they were worn on a string round the neck? Instead we have a very large number of sealings made on tablets, or rather on tablet envelopes. Very few bullae or tags have been discovered, which is somewhat surprising since the texts often mention them. As far as I know it has not been possible to combine the two types of evidence, so that we do not have any seal which is also found impressed on a tablet. To these categories of material we must then add the numerous textual references to the practices of sealing, and these will form the basis for this essay.

Most of the seals known are of haematite but a few are of lapis lazuli; of the Old Assyrian seals found in Assur, three were of haematite, three of lapis, and one of limestone, and three of the four textual references to seals which mention the material they were made of indicate that they were lapis; the fourth text mentions a seal of husarum, a word which may denote haematite. Two of these seals are said to weigh 1½ shekels and for one of them we know the price: 16½ shekels of silver.<sup>14</sup> We also have a number of stamp seals. As far as can be established from the sealings on texts, all stamp seals belonged to Anatolians. There are many more stamp seals from the later period, Level 1b, and this surely reflects a greater Anatolian presence in the texts.

Some seals carry inscriptions. The typical Old Assyrian seal inscription gave the name of the owner and his patronymic; in isolated cases we also find a title. A number of seals are inscribed with the divine names Šamaš and Aja, but they are most probably imports from Babylonia, and finally we have a group of seals which are old, re-used ones which in some instances carried unaltered inscriptions.<sup>15</sup>

The attested sealings are very numerous, but they are all found on clay tablets. Sealed tablets fall into two groups, reflecting different practices in the two periods: in the period of Level 2 sealings are found only on tablet-envelopes, but from Level 1b we have some examples of sealings made directly on the tablet, with no envelope being made at all. This is clearly an Anatolian practice for it occurs only in cases where the text concerns Anatolians; the Assyrians continued to make use of tablet-envelopes also in the later period.<sup>16</sup>

The Assyrian method was as follows: first the text of the contract, legal document, or letter was written on a tablet; this was then encased in an envelope of clay on which the seal(s) were rolled; finally, the text of the envelope (in some cases repeating the wording of the inner tablet verbatim, in others giving an abbreviated version, and in the case of letters usually giving only the address) was written in the space which was left over between the sealings.<sup>17</sup>

The persons who sealed the tablets were listed on both the envelope and the inner tablet where we find the customary phrase mahar PN, "before PN." Contracts were sealed by witnesses and by the person who was in some way bound by the terms of the contract, usually as debtor; the latter person is mentioned in the list on the envelope but his name does not appear in the mahar-formula on the inner tablet. Legal protocols which recorded proceedings in court before appointed witnesses or arbiters were sealed only by these persons, not by the parties to the dispute; the only exceptions appear to be the cases where the involved parties directly bound themselves to compliance with the settlement proposed, and I refer as an example to the text ATHE 24: this document regulated the relations between a number of persons who were the heirs of two large business-houses whose bosses had died. The deceased men had been partners but the heirs wish to discontinue this arrangement; they are said to have appointed the arbiters "by mutual agreement," and we hear that they have sworn an oath.<sup>18</sup> Also official documents, i.e., verdicts, were sealed, but they do not contain a list of the names of the persons whose seals have been used; instead they say that it is the colony which has sealed.<sup>19</sup>

Letters, private as well as official, were placed in envelopes and sealed. It was, of course, the sender(s) who sealed the text, usually with several sealings, and the text normally is very brief: "To A. Seal of B."<sup>20</sup> A few examples show that the envelope could carry a few lines in which the recipient is admonished to pay heed to the text of the letter inside;<sup>21</sup> and finally we have a very few examples of envelopes which carried a relatively long text which was not identical with—although of course closely related to—the text of the letter inside.<sup>22</sup> Since practically all the letters found were opened by the recipients, most envelopes are lost and we do not know how common this latter type was.

### Sealings not Made on Tablets

Before turning to a review of the various types of sealed tablets I shall briefly consider the evidence concerning the use of seals in other situations. It could be said very simply that everything could be sealed—from logs of wood and quantities of grain to shipments of goods sent by donkey caravan, containers of all kinds, bundles of silver and gold—even houses.<sup>23</sup>

The Old Assyrians who lived in Anatolia were merchants and the basis of their livelihood was a constantly flowing traffic of goods and money, and it is obvious that all shipments were sent under seal. Each caravan consisting of donkeys loaded with tin and textiles which left the capital Assur was checked by officials of the city government, who assessed the value of the shipment, for the export-tax was computed as a percentage



of the silver value of the consignment. The tin was loaded in standardized containers which always weighed 65 minas each. Most such shipments are said to be under the seal of the City, and this presumably means that the officials who checked the containers also gave them an official sealing on a tag. Such a sealing may also have served as a guarantee for the correct weight. We know that sealed containers could not be opened en route, not even in cases where the transporter had not received adequate funds to cover the travelling expenses; the transporter had to pay out of his own funds and then settle with the consignor at a later time when the proper procedure for opening such containers could take place in front of witnesses.<sup>24</sup> Many shipments consisted of several small consignments which were sent with one transporter even though they belonged to different owners, and we can observe that in such cases each consignment was individually sealed by its owner; the men who received such a shipment were then given careful instructions to check the sealings and have the consignments distributed in accordance therewith.<sup>25</sup>

If a shipment was not destined for immediate use the sealings were not to be broken, of course, and in the cases where goods were to be stored the same is true. We have an example of such storage in the Aššur-temple in the capital: "Take the bundle of gold with my seal into the Aššur-temple and ask the kumrum-priest for the sack which is deposited together with the bundles under my seal. Inspect the sealing (on the sack) and break it, and then place the bundle of gold on the . . . ; seal the sack again and have my name indicated in front of the sealings."<sup>26</sup> The writer of this letter asked his representatives to seal the sack with their own seals, so the writing added in front of this new sealing (on a tag, of course) served the purpose of identifying the owner: the sealing itself did not point to the real owner of the valuables contained in the sack. This simple example points to the existence of a firm and widespread structure of representation, agency and partnerships which connected all the various Assyrian establishments. We have many references to such practices where representatives or agents acted on behalf of absent persons, occasionally sealing objects. There are some textual references which show that certain persons could seal documents on behalf of others, i.e., act on their behalf in lawsuits and other legal negotiations.<sup>27</sup>

Tablets might also be transported from one place to another, and we have terms which must designate special containers used for such purposes; these containers were of course sealed.<sup>28</sup> When tablets were kept in the houses in the colonies they were usually stored in special locked rooms which—at least during the not infrequent periods when the master of the house was away on a business-trip—were kept under seal.<sup>29</sup> It was a common practice of these traders to commend their wives to watch these sealed rooms very carefully; the opening of such rooms in the absence of the owner involved special legal procedures. We have some verdicts which authorize certain persons to enter the strongroom of a private house by breaking the sealings.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, the authorities could in some cases have entire houses sealed in connection with legal investigations.<sup>31</sup> As a special case I mention the letter TC 1:30, sent from the well-known trader Pūšu-kēn in Kanesh to his representatives in Assur after the death of his wife; he asked them to check the contents of the magazines and place sealings on doors and windows.<sup>32</sup>

Most of these examples of sealings found on objects other than tablets can be understood on the basis of private ownership or claim. The sealing shows that the objects have not been tampered with. When a sealing is broken by anyone other than the man who made it, the act takes place before witnesses and is often recorded on a tablet. Some examples show that sealings, for instance on houses or strongrooms, could be made by persons who served as a kind of witness; they were appointed by the authorities or chosen by the involved parties as being "strangers" (ahiütum), i.e., men who had no direct connection with the involved firm or individual. Such impartial men could be taken into a sealed magazine, for instance of a deceased merchant, in order to supervise the inspection of its contents, and they would then seal the door with their own seals when they left.<sup>33</sup> Finally, we have the official sealings, for instance the sealings of the City on the containers which left Assur, or the sealings of the authorities of the colony on tablet-containers which were to be shipped to Assur.<sup>34</sup> These sealings confront us with special problems which will be briefly dealt with later.

### Sealings on Tablets

The three main types of sealings mentioned above are paralleled in the practices concerning the sealing of tablets. Private sealings on shipments and containers correspond in nature to the sealing of letters; the sealings made by “strangers” on the doors of houses and magazines must correspond to those made by the witnesses to private contracts and legal documents; and the official sealings on tablet-containers have their counterparts in the sealings found on official documents such as records of verdicts and letters.

There is no need to discuss the ordinary private letters in this context, but the other main types of documents which were placed in sealed envelopes must be looked at a little more closely: contracts, legal protocols, verdicts, and special types of letters. The first problem encountered is one of terminology: we have several terms which refer to documents of various kinds but it is not certain that these words correspond to the categories which we usually establish. The general word for a clay tablet, *tuppum*, certainly covers all categories; the term *ti'irtum*, which is usually translated “message,” “order,” or the like, must refer specifically to letters; *našpertum* is a word which is derived from the verb *šapārum* which means “to send, write a letter,” so it is at least likely to denote a text which somehow was sent from one place to another; and we have a rare and not very clear term *išurtum* which probably could be translated “drawing,” and which Balkan has suggested as a designation of a special (wooden) tablet on which a kind of local hieroglyphic writing was used.<sup>35</sup> The term *tarkistum* represents a derivation from the verb *rakāsum*, “to bind,” and it is clearly a designation of a legally binding contract; on the other hand, the word *tahsistum*, derived from *hasāsum*, “to remember,” seems to denote a private note or memorandum.

The verb *harāmum* seems to denote the act of placing the tablet in its envelope, but—as noted by Landsberger and CAD—in the Old Assyrian texts the verb is not really used for this technical act; rather, it is clear that it refers to the legal aspect of validation or certification.<sup>36</sup> A *tuppum harmum* is thus primarily “a certified tablet,” and this is the translation which will be used here. The precise nature of this certification remains to be explained, and one may start with the observation that although letters were certainly placed in sealed envelopes, they are never referred to as *tuppum harmum*; this is true also of such special letters which can be seen to have had legal force: we have scores of references to *našpertum ša kunukkim*, i.e. “missives under seal,” but the verb *harāmum* or the derived adjective cannot be used in such contexts. The most obvious difference between such texts and those which could be referred to as *tuppum harmum* is that the latter were witnessed, and I suggest that this is the essential aspect of the certification of a tablet which made it a *tuppum harmum*.<sup>37</sup>

There are some expressions which serve to modify the simple phrase *tuppum harmum*, and these must surely have some significance. A certified tablet could thus be further described as *ša kunukkišu*, “under his seal”; the person whose sealing is referred to in this phrase must be the one who is in some way bound by the terms of the contract, i.e., usually the debtor but quite often also the person who acknowledged the payment of a debt. The *tuppum harmum ša kunukkišu* was most commonly a promissory note<sup>38</sup> or a quittance.<sup>39</sup> The promissory note is of course one of the best known textual types and it always carried the seals of the witnesses and the person who was bound by the contract. Quittances are often referred to in our letters and we also have a number of actual examples. The great mobility of the Old Assyrian traders of course made it necessary for them to work out a system whereby it was possible for them to repay their debts in time even though they could not be present at the place where the contract was set up and the deed was kept. Payment was then made to the representatives of the creditor, and these drew up a quittance, a certified tablet bearing their seals; this document was then sent to the representatives of the debtor at the place where the creditor stayed, and when these men presented the quittance to him he would hand over the original deed.<sup>40</sup> This tablet would then be “killed,” i.e., the envelope would be broken whereupon the document lost its legal force.<sup>41</sup> The inner tablets were presumably often kept in the archives of the merchants.

The other main qualification of the phrase *tuppum harmum* was *ša šibi*, “with witnesses,” and that expression is perhaps less easy to explain since it has already been concluded that the one fact which determined the use of the phrase *harmum* was that such a document was witnessed. However, it is probable that the “certified tablet with witnesses” was of a special type, being a text of the category which we refer to as “legal protocols,” i.e., documents which record negotiations by two parties which took place before witnesses or arbiters appointed by the colonial authorities.<sup>42</sup> I have pointed out above that such texts usually carried only the sealings of the witnesses or arbiters.

Although not a “certified” document, a text which could be referred to as *našpertum* was quite clearly in many instances one which had some legal force and could be used as the basis for a claim. I cannot in this context attempt a comprehensive evaluation of this complex problem but a few examples may serve to indicate in which contexts we often find this word.<sup>43</sup> In the letter KUG 34 we hear that a “cleared and certified tablet” has been issued in the office of the Kanesh colony when the representatives of the absent trader Enlil-bāni have concluded negotiations with the local authorities; however, a “cleared *našpertum*” is sent to Enlil-bāni himself and, as noted by Hecker, this document appears to have had the same importance and legal power as the original document since claims could be based on it alone. It is sure to have been sealed, although this is not expressly stated. Another example is found in CCT 5:4b where a certain Amur-Aššur writes: “I owe you 1 mina 10 shekels of silver. You have in your possession a tablet with my seal. I have paid the money to your father in the City, and he gave me a tablet with his seal in the City stating that the silver had been paid; also, he gave me his “missive” addressed to you and me and it is presently in Eluhut. I have shown it to Ili-ašrannī (presumably the creditor’s local representative). My dear fathers! Give the tablet with my seal to Innaja and Aššur-nādā, keep the tablet, and seal it and give it to Aššur-nādā so that he may bring it to me. Then I [shall send] the tablet with your father’s seal.”<sup>44</sup>

The *našpertum* was thus not the quittance itself, but rather a kind of letter which explained the background for the situation. Another relatively enlightening example is TC 1:22, a text which informs us that a certain Su’ejja has given a shipment of silver to a transporter who has brought it to Assur; later, ownership of this shipment somehow passed to a man by the name of Ili-wēdāku, and he received “a certified tablet with the seal of Su’ejja” as proof of his ownership. Further, a *našpartum* with the seal of the same Su’ejja was sent to the transporter in which he was also informed of the transfer of ownership of the shipment he was transporting.<sup>45</sup> Obviously, such a letter must have had some legal force for when later again a brother of the previous owner confiscated the shipment—perhaps because he did not know about the change of ownership—he was to be taken to court by the new owner’s representative; the basis for such an action was the *našpartum* mentioned above.<sup>46</sup>

Letters of this type can only rarely be clearly identified but it seems likely that we have an example in a royal letter found in Kanesh. A letter in the University Museum in Philadelphia published recently by Hildegard Lewy<sup>47</sup> was still encased in the original envelope on which imprints of the royal seal of Sargon I were to be seen, and the envelope furthermore carried a relatively long inscription which was not identical with the text on the inner tablet. The letter is addressed to the private merchant Pūšu-kēn and is concerned with the problem of securing a certain amount of money from one Asqudum, a man who has been entrusted with the transportation and sale of a large shipment for the king but who failed to honor his obligation. In the text on the envelope Pūšu-kēn is told that two letters have been dispatched and that he should open only one of them, keeping the other one; further, he must get hold of the money from Asqudum, “acting on your own authority,” a difficult technical expression which appears to denote a legal action whereby an individual appears as a private person, i.e., not using the normal legal procedures which involved the colonial authorities.<sup>48</sup> It seems likely that the basis for such a course of action was constituted by the sealed letter which Pūšu-kēn was asked not to open.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, another text which belongs to the same correspondence, KTS 30, and which was not found in the unopened envelope, probably refers directly to the Philadelphia text in the following passage: “You already have in your possession my letter stating that you should seize the money on your own authority in accordance with my letter.”<sup>50</sup>

We have many textual examples which show that in normal circumstances a properly certified and sealed tablet constituted adequate proof of a claim.<sup>51</sup> In some situations it was necessary to go further, however, and we have a special Old Assyrian technical phrase: *tuppam u šībē dannunum*, “to strengthen the tablet and the witnesses,” which can be seen from some texts to denote a corroboration of the previous testimony of witnesses by way of an oath.<sup>52</sup>

These many different uses of the practice of sealing can perhaps be summed up under three main headings:

- A) sealings which indicate ownership or claim
- B) sealings which indicate an obligation, usually made by the parties to a contractual agreement
- C) sealings made by witnesses and by official agencies.

### The Ownership of Seals

The obvious comparison between a sealing and a signature is of course very tempting and in general I believe that it provides a correct impression. It is well known that instead of a sealing one could in some periods impress in the clay a thumb-nail or the hem of one's garment, and these acts are to be understood as establishing an especially close relationship between the individual and the contract.<sup>53</sup> Seals should therefore be truly unique in each case and owned and used by one person or authority only. In fact, this does appear to be the general situation, and one may for instance point to the fact that seals in this period (as well as in others) often were placed in graves, obviously together with their owner. A slightly confusing situation exists in connection with one of the graves from Assur where no less than three seals were found, one of them bearing an inscription.<sup>54</sup> We know that kings and high officials in other periods could have more than one seal,<sup>55</sup> and it cannot be excluded that the same was the case with at least some of the Old Assyrian merchants. Another indication, although of a quite different character, of the very personal nature of seals is the fact that they were quite often inherited; in one instance we find a clause in a testament where the dying man wills his own seal to one of his sons.<sup>56</sup> We have actual examples where it can be shown that a seal must have been inherited by the man who used it since he was the son of the man whose name was engraved on the seal. One particular seal is known to have been used both by the original owner and by his son: on TC 3:247, seal 45, it was used by Aššur-rē'i, son of Puzur-Ištar, and on BIN 4:211 by Pīlah-Ištar, son of Aššur-rē'i. Finally, it should not be forgotten that the simple fact that seals were engraved with the names of their owners—even though very few seals have such legends—must point to strictly private ownership of the seal.

In spite of these quite convincing arguments it cannot be said that the situation is very clear, however, for the seals appear to be used in a quite confusing way. It is difficult to establish clear conclusions concerning these questions, partly because the ownership of only a relatively few individual seals has been established. In fact, even in cases where the same seal can be found on several contracts it is often impossible to relate it to any one of the persons mentioned. One of the reasons for this confusion is obviously the common Old Assyrian practice of re-use of old seals; we have examples of Ur III seals being used by Old Assyrian traders in Anatolia, sometimes with the name of the new owner added on the original design.<sup>57</sup> One of the seals discovered in the grave in Assur was an altered Ur III seal: a straightforward introduction scene to which a second scene with a bull standing on an altar with a worshipper in front has been added; the result is cluttered and the two styles clash harshly.<sup>58</sup> It is obvious, however, that such an old seal must have been valued as an antique, and it cannot at all be excluded that it may have been an heirloom which had been passed on from earlier generations. It is not at all clear whether the transfer of a seal from one person to another, whether by sale or inheritance, often led to alterations of this nature, but I refer to the strange case of seal C found on text 41 in ICK 1 which bears the inscription: *Idī-Ištar, son of Šuli*; the same seal is also found as seal B on Ka 83 (KTS 46a) in ICK 2, but there the inscription is copied as: *Idī-Suen!* The texts tell us that the seal was in fact used by a man with the name *Idī-Suen, son of Idī-Ištar*,

so unless the copies in the modern editions are faulty we would have to conclude that the imprint in ICK 1 gives us the original inscription, containing the names of the father and grandfather of the user, whereas the impression in ICK 2 stems from a later date when he had had the old inscription removed and his own name written instead.<sup>59</sup> It is not difficult to see how such a re-use of seals is bound to cause confusion in the case of seals which do not have any inscription.

To some extent the confusion must be due to our lack of proper prosopographical knowledge, and I would like to point out that we do have some cases where it can be seen that seals could also be inherited from brother to brother.<sup>60</sup> Seals taken over from more distant relatives or passed on through several generations present us with problems which can only very occasionally be resolved. One such example is probably the famous *Šilūlu*-seal which according to its legend originally belonged to a king of Assur who was called *Šilūlu*, son of *Dakiki*; this seal was re-used by a man whose name was also *Šilūlu*, but whose father's name was *Uku*, and who most obviously was not a king.<sup>61</sup> This seal was therefore probably an heirloom which was used—with an unaltered inscription—by a descendant of the illustrious ancestor.

It may be useful to present some of the more outlandish problems encountered in the study of these sealings. Some of these appear to be especially frequent in texts where we find that Anatolians were involved, for it is not unusual to find that the number of actual sealings on the tablets does not correspond to the number of persons who are said to have sealed the document. In a number of cases this must be explained by the fact that the Anatolian custom required that both man and wife (and sometimes the adult children as well) “sign” contracts where the family was being bound to some obligation, and therefore we find the names of both husband and wife in the list of persons who have sealed, but they obviously did not each have a seal.<sup>62</sup> One notes that the mere fact that they are mentioned in the list must have been considered sufficient proof. A particularly intriguing example is the unpublished text from Level 1b known as n/k 32, a most important document which was mentioned by Landsberger at the *Rencontre Assyriologique* in Chicago in 1967 and briefly discussed on the basis of photographs. The document may contain the text of a treaty between the Anatolian kingdoms of *Kanesh* and *Mamma* on the one side and some Assyrian authority on the other, and, according to Landsberger, it was sealed by 8 Anatolians and 4 Assyrians. The sealings on this tablet have since been published by *Nimet Özgüç* and it can be seen that the tablet bears the imprints of 6 different stamp seals (of course used by the Anatolians) and 3 different cylinder seals; we thus lack the sealings of 2 Anatolians and one Assyrian.<sup>63</sup>

As pointed out above, it is quite common to find the same seal used on different tablets without the name of a single person recurring; some of these examples involve Anatolians.<sup>64</sup> I find it difficult to handle such examples as the following, however: the envelope ICK 2:119 has three sealings, A, B, and C, and there are three witnesses, all Assyrians; seal A recurs on ATHE 2 but none of the five Assyrians who sealed that text is found in ICK 2:119; seal B recurs on ICK 1:25 as seal B, and none of the three Assyrians who sealed that text is found on ICK 2:119; seal B also occurs on ICK 2:95, sealed by four Assyrians, none of whom is found on any of the other texts.

Another example: Seal A on ICK 2:103 has the legend *Nabi-Suen*, son of *Puzur-Ištar*, and a man of this name is found in the text; but the same seal is used on ICK 1:39 where this person does not appear. Or take the fact that an unpublished seal in *Ankara* has the legend *Aššur-nādā*, son of *Šarra-Suen*, but this very person is known to have used another seal.<sup>65</sup> In fact, approximately half of all the seals which have inscriptions giving a name were used by persons with different names, and it is not possible to establish any relationship between the name on the seal and the name of the user.

This state of affairs allows different explanations, of course. I feel certain that inheritance of seals must explain a number of the apparent anomalies, although it must be admitted that when a man uses the seal of his father or brother this could also be explained as proof of the use of borrowed seals. Probably both explanations are valid, and it must also be remembered that although our texts only very rarely mention sale of seals, this must have taken place. It is also possible that some traders had more than one seal, indeed,

some of the major merchants may have had seals deposited with their representatives in the various important colonies. Some rare references make it clear that seals at least sometimes were kept in places where the owner was not. The unpublished text MET. 5A contains the passage: "The seal of Idī-Ištar, son of Aššur-nādā. While he was still alive four shareholders placed it under seal and entrusted it to me. The seal of Šamaš-tappā'i. Entrusted to me under the seals of three merchants."<sup>66</sup> This passage occurs in a long list of valuables, mainly tablets, which were stored in a private house, and it shows at least that these seals were valuable objects which could possibly be used for fraudulent purposes by others. Another example is found in CCT 4:6b, where a seal belonging to an absent person is entrusted to another person together with tablets and various containers.<sup>67</sup>

Apart from the official seal of the god Aššur, all seals known were owned by individuals and there is no evidence anywhere to indicate that corporate entities, private firms or families, or political organs had seals. The sealings which are said to have been made by official authorities such as colonies and stations were in fact sealings made by individuals. The letters known as "tablets of the City" were really letters sent from the king, using the title waklum, and two of these are official ones which are addressed to the Kanesh colony and simply record verdicts passed by the city-assembly of Assur; the king functioned as the executive officer of the city-assembly and his sealing in some way validated the verdict.<sup>68</sup> In Anatolia there was no permanent political figure of this type, and no officer sent out from the central government who in the same way could validate the decisions of the colonies. Verdicts are therefore said to carry the sealing of the colony, but in actual fact they bear the imprints of several different seals which must have belonged to individuals who in some fashion had been empowered to act for the colony; the numbers seven, three, and one are attested.<sup>69</sup> The precise basis for this power remains unknown to us at present, but it may be pointed out that representation of the community by individuals who cannot be connected with any known office in the administrative structure is known from several texts; the term limmum—which is typically connected with the year-eponymy in Assur—is used about these men in some cases, but they were not year-eponyms. It would take us too far from the subject to enter a meaningful discussion of these representative practices, but it is interesting to note that on such documents as records of verdicts not even the names of the owners of the seals were indicated. It is surely at the present time fruitless to speculate about the kind of responsibility which may have been carried by the persons who by way of sealing such documents in some way could represent the community.<sup>70</sup>

## NOTES

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I am grateful to the British School of Archaeology in Iraq for permission to reproduce the illustration in my figure 12 (from *Wiseman Treaties*, p. 18, fig. 4). Illustrations from ICK 1 are published with the permission of L. Matouš.

Abbreviations which differ from the CAD system will be found in my volume *The Old Assyrian City-State and its Colonies, Mesopotamia 4* (Copenhagen, 1976), hereafter referred to as OACC.

1. For the general background see the studies of P. Garelli, *Les Assyriens en Cappadoce* (Paris, 1963) and L. L. Orlin, *Assyrian Colonies in Cappadocia* (The Hague, 1970).
2. Fig. 1, impression on the unpublished text F.T. 2B; the legend is: A-šūr-SIPA DUMU Puzur<sub>4</sub>-Ištar. The inscription is probably secondary.
3. See fig. 2, seal A on ICK 1 11a; this seal belonged to the well-known Assyrian trader Pūšu-kēn, son of Su<sup>2</sup>ejja, according to the inscription it bears. Further, fig. 3, seal B on F.T. 2B, which has the legend <sup>m</sup>Puzur<sub>4</sub>-A-[šur] DUMU Sú-in-na-[da].

4. Fig. 4, seal D on ICK 1:35; fig. 5, seal A on ICK 1: 45a; fig. 6, seal A on ICK 1:46; fig. 7, seal A on ICK 1:79a; fig. 8, seal C on the unpublished text F.T. 1B; and fig. 9, seal C on F.T. 3B. The various styles have been discussed and analysed by N. Özgüç, *The Anatolian Group of Cylinder Seal Impressions from Kültepe*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınlarından, 5. Series, no. 22 (Ankara, 1965).
5. Fig. 10, seal C on the unpublished text F.T. 2B; also TC 3 seal 14.
6. Cf. Porada, *Corpus*, pp. 107-15; N. Özgüç in T. Özgüç, *Ausgrabungen in Kültepe 1949*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınlarından, 5. Series, no. 12 (Ankara, 1953), pp. 226-42; idem, *Seals and Seal Impressions of Level 1b from Karum Kanish*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınlarından, 5. Series, no. 25 (Ankara, 1968); see also n. 4 above. The terminology is not entirely consistent however, and especially some of the early identifications of special varieties of Anatolian substyles appear to have been abandoned. Also, the fact that the terminology worked out by N. Özgüç is not universally accepted, or at least not made use of, complicates matters; cf. Kienast in *ATHE*, 103.
7. Cf. M. Tosun in *AS 16* (Chicago, 1965), pp. 183-88; apparently such a study was begun but never completed by E. B. Reilly.
8. See fig. 11; cf. C. Preusser, *Die Paläste in Assur*, *WVDOG 66* (Berlin, 1955), pp. 10-11. For the seals from the graves see A. Moortgat, *Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel* (Berlin, 1940), pp. 130-31.
9. See D. J. Wiseman, *The Vassal-Treaties of Esarhaddon* (London, 1958) (also published as *Iraq 20*), pp. 17-19; see fig. 12. The legend of the seal was: 1) ša <sup>d</sup>A-šūr 2) ša É A-lim<sup>ki</sup>, "of divine Aššur, of the City-house"; Wiseman mistakenly regarded the latter institution as "the temple of the City," but the bīt Alim was a well-known office in Assur, the main administrative bureau where the year-eponym was in charge. Why the seal of the god is related to this office remains uncertain.
10. See n. 14 below.
11. See n. 6 above.
12. The final volume in the CCT series contains the publication by D. Collon of all the impressions found on the Old Assyrian texts from the British Museum (P. Garelli and D. Collon, *CCT 6* [London, 1976]).
13. I am told that a publication of all seals in the Yale collection is in preparation.
14. BIN 6:7 mentions a seal of lapis being sent from Assur to Anatolia; the unpublished text VAT 13543 says that two textiles and "a seal of 1½ shekel of lapis lazuli" has been given to a person, probably for sale and transport to Anatolia; the letter KTS 33b contains the following passage: "You said: Šu-Bēlum's seal of husārum is in my possession! Give his seal to Šu-Bēlum! If you have sold it then give him the money which was the price of his seal!" Finally, the unpublished text F.T. 4 contains the passage: (11) 16½ GÍN KUG.BABBAR ku-nu-ku-um (12) [š]a 1½ GÍN ša NA<sub>4</sub> GÌN.ZA, "16½ shekels of silver: a seal of 1½ shekels made of lapis lazuli." Landsberger's suggestion that husārum should be a word for lapis lazuli, perhaps the Old Assyrian reading of ZA.GÌN, is somewhat doubtful, even though he privately showed me an unpublished text from Kültepe which had the strange writing hu-ZA.GÌN.
15. A famous example is the seal of Ur-lugalbanda, the scribe of the Ur III king Ibbi-Sîn; cf. Thureau-Dangin, *RA 8* (1911), p. 144, and discussion in Garelli, *AC*, 31-35.
16. See the various examples in N. Özgüç, *Level 1b*, of sealed tablets, for instance plates 5 and 7.
17. For some clear examples of writing on top of the sealings I refer to *ATHE*, plates 14 and 19, or to N. Özgüç, *Anatolian Group*, illustrations 32, 45, 75b, and 83.
18. The introductory formula of these texts is styled as a statement of the appointed arbiters, and in this case they say: "By mutual agreement they seized us and they swore an oath by the City, and we brought an end to their dispute." The inner tablet ends with the words: "[8 names]—these men were those who brought an end to the dispute,"
19. See below for some comments on these questions. The rules governing Old Assyrian sealing practices have been studied by Eisser, "Beiträge zur Urkundenlehre der altassyrischen Rechtsurkunden vom Kültepe." *Festschrift Paul Koschaker 3*, 1939, 94-126.



20. See for instance TC 3:122, 124, 125, 128A + B.
21. See for instance ICK 1:33a: “My dear brothers, pay heed to the words of the letter!” Or HG 75 (RA 51, pp. 5-6), where the envelope has: “Urgent, urgent! Do not make trouble!”
22. See below, p. 97.
23. Quantities of gold, silver, tin, copper, and textiles occur passim. In KTS 22b a block of 6 minas of *husārum* is put under seal, in TC 2:47 it is 55 minas of pork fat, in BIN 6:70 4 donkeys, in TC 3:14 quantities of grain; containers of various types are often sealed: *tamalakku*-containers in L 29-600, *šiliānu*-containers in BIN 4:90.
24. See my OACP, 141-42, and Veenhof, Aspects, 30-32.
25. Cf. KTH 13, a letter in which we find the passage (ll. 28-36): “If the (Anatolian) palace has not taken any of the textiles and my textiles have been brought down, then check the sealings and let Ikuppi-Aššur take the textiles of Habātum, my mother; Atata should take mine; Aššur-malik should take those of his father; Šu-Ištar should take the textiles of Aššur-rabi, my elder brother(?), etc.”
26. TC 3:68: (19) [ri-ik]-sà-am ša KUG.KI (20) ku-[nu-ki-a] ana É A-šur (21) šé-ri-ba-ma na-ru-qam (22) ša a-šar ri-ik-sú (23) ku-nu-ki-a i-ba-ši-ú-ni (24) ku-um-ra-am er-ša-ma (25) ku-nu-ki-a am-ra-ma pu-uṭ-ra-ma (26) a-na tí-ri be-e-li-im (27) ri-ik-sà-am ša GUŠKIN (28) šu-uk-na-ma ku-un-kà-ma (29) i-pá-ni ku-nu-ki šu-mi (30) ú-dí-a.
27. See for instance TC 1:79 (EL 11), in which all the heirs of Pūšu-kēn are said to have sealed the text, thus including the woman Ahaha who was a priestess and cannot have been present since she stayed in Assur. At the end of the text it is said that one of the other persons who sealed “represented her” (*kima Ahaha izziz*).
28. The most common expression is *tamalakkum* which usually, although not always, is used as a container for tablets; see for instance BIN 6:18, 18; 40, 9-11; TC 3:108, 13 -14 ; 115, 2-6; BIN 4:36, 23-25. The *šiliānu*-container appears to be used most often for valuables such as silver or gold, but tablets could be stored in it; see KUG 30, 4-6. In the same way the *huršiānu*-container was occasionally used for tablets; see BIN 6:57, 16 -18 . The term *maknakum* appears a few times and could perhaps also refer to a sealed room; see for example BIN 6:20, 4.
29. The strongroom was known as *maššartum* and we have numerous references which show that it was sealed; see for instance CCT 3:30, 38-40. The expression *bīt kunukkim* is found only once, in CCT 2:33, 24-26, and it cannot be seen whether it refers to a single room. The “kitchen,” *huršum*, often functioned as a magazine and was kept under seal; see for instance Cont. 26, 11, or TC 3:51, 10-12. The letter CCT 3:14, 7-12, mentions both the main house (called *ekallum*) and a minor building, perhaps a shed (see CAD E, 60), which are both sealed; and BIN 6:20, 6-8 refers to a “lower and an upper house” which are under seal.
30. EL 274 is a record of such a verdict passed by the Kanesh colony. Cf. also TC 3:99, 5-12, where a verdict of the City gives certain persons the right to enter a house and inspect its contents.
31. See CCT 5:1b, 8-9.
32. (7) 1 li-im 3 me-at še-um i-na (8) ha-ri-a-tim ša-pí-ik er-ba-ma (9) i-na ba-a-bi ù a-pá-tim (10) ší-pá-sú id-a.
33. See n. 30 above; in the letter TC 3:99 we find the following passage: “The very day Saklija arrives (from Assur) you must let the colony hear the tablet of the City, and then seize three outsiders and enter my father’s house, the old one, and open Aššur-muttabbil’s ‘kitchen’ sealed by his representatives, and break their sealings, and then let the three men seal it.” In CCT 5:3a, 28-33, we have another example: “When they opened the strongroom they let 5 men, outsiders, enter and made them seal; they themselves sealed together with them.”
34. A very clear example is found in BIN 4:103 (EL 298), 9-36: “In the *tamalakku*-containers: 4 missives which the primary assembly of the Kanesh colony has written; 4 missives from Imdi-ilum which the



primary assembly of the Kanesh colony has sealed; 1 certified tablet concerning 44 minas of silver which Šu-Ištar, son of Iliš-tikal, owes as a debt to Aššur-ṭāb—which silver Buzāzu has already paid, but which tablet is being held with reference to  $2\frac{2}{3}$  minas 5 shekels of silver which constitutes the interest on the money; 1 tablet concerning 20 minas of silver which Amur-ili owes to Aššur-ṭāb and for which Amur-Aššur, Itūr-ili, and Puzur-Aššur were guarantors. In all: 10 sealed tablets which the primary assembly has sealed in tamalakku-containers. All these tablets they entrusted to Aššur-nišu, Itūr-ili's attorney, and they will be deposited (as evidence) before the City and our Lord."

35. Balkan, OLZ 60 (1965), cols. 157-58. This interpretation is very uncertain however.
36. See Landsberger, *Türk Tarih Arkeoloji ve Etnografya Dergisi* 4, 13, n. 1, and discussion in CAD, s.v. arāmu.
37. See also the examples cited in CAD, s.v. arāmu, for the elliptic construction where the direct object of the verb is the word šībē, "witnesses." I refer furthermore to a few typical examples: KTS 5a, 21-23: "As to the matter concerning Hananārum—establish three witnesses for him and certify their tablet!" TC 3:76, 15-27: "lead Kulumaja, Agua, and Aššur-malik to the Gate of the God. Certify their tablet, stating that he gave 30 minas of silver to Ennum-Aššur under the nose of his shareholders. If one of the witnesses is not present in Kanesh, then summon the rest and have them indicate (the name of) their missing partner on the tablet." In the damaged and highly complex text TC 3:130, which deserves a more detailed investigation than can be attempted here, it seems relatively clear that the directly involved parties in the lawsuit seal (kanākum) a tablet in the Gate of the God, whereas four men who are set as witnesses at the same place certify (harāmum) the document.
38. As a clear example I cite ICK 1:13, 5-9: "Habuala, the queen's shepherd owes me  $12\frac{1}{2}$  minas of silver and 100 sacks of barley. I have in my possession his certified tablet bearing his seal." Cf. also CCT 5:4b discussed below.
39. See CCT 5:4b discussed below, even though the word harmum is not used; see also such a case as CCT 3:22b, 27-29, where we find mention of "his certified tablet bearing his seal, stating how he has been cleared."
40. See for instance BIN 4:42, 17-25: "A tablet concerning 4 minas of silver which Aššur-taklāku, son of Šu-Enlil, owes to our father, produce that and show it to the two sons of Aššur-taklāku, and if they show you a tablet with our father's seal of full payment then take that tablet and give them their tablet." The "tablet of full payment," tuppum ša šabā'e, is the quittance itself; see also CCT 4:16a, 27-32.
41. Only in Old Assyrian do we find the verbs duākum and muātum used for the invalidation of a tablet; I refer to the many instructive examples in CAD, s.v. dāku and mātu 2 (in press).
42. The distinction between these two types comes out clearly in ATHE 24, 24-27, which mentions money received from claims outstanding: lu tuppum harmum ša kunukkišunu lu ša šībē, "either certified tablets with their seals or with witnesses." However, the tuppum harmum ša šibi could probably also be a regular deed of loan; I refer for instance to BIN 4:42 or ICK 1:31b. The text TC 1:103 (EL 306) is most probably a tuppum harmum ša šibija as suggested by Lewy.
43. The term clearly has a wide semantic range and it may be opportune to mention some examples of a different nature. Thus, a našpertum was sometimes simply a letter: see BIN 4:75 and L 29-586, both of which must be such texts according to their own wording. The fact that a našpertum at least sometimes was placed in an envelope can be seen from BIN 6:18, 9-10 (našp[er-tam] la patitam, "an unopened n."); see also ICK 1:183, 19. There are many imprecise references to the term referring to a document which is of a special type, having legal force or being especially valuable; in a number of instances they form the basis for some kind of legal action (see for instance KTH 7, TC 3:62, CCT 3:34b). It functions as a deed of loan in CCT 2:19a.
44. (7) 1 MA.NA 10 GÍN (8) KUG.BABBAR a-hi-ib-lá-kum (9) DUB-pá-am ša ku-nu-ki-a (10) tù-kà-al (11) KUG.BABBAR i-na A-lim<sup>ki</sup> (12) a-na a-bi<sub>4</sub>-kà (13) áš-qú-ul-ma (14) DUB-pá-am ša ku-nu-ki-šu (15) i-na A-lim<sup>ki</sup> (16) ša ki-ma KUG.BABBAR ša-bu (17) i-dí-nam ù na-áš-pè-er-tù-šu (18) a-na

ku-a-tí ù i-a-tí (19) i-dí-na-ma i-na E-lu-hu-ut (20) i-ba-ši Ì-lí-áš-ra-ni (21) ú-kà-li-im (22) a-ba-ú-a (a-)tù-nu (23) a-ma-kam DUB-pá-am (24) ša ku-nu-ki-a a-na l-na-a (25) ù A-šùr-na-da dí-in-ma (26) DUB-pá-am ki-lá-šu-ma (27) ku-un-kà-šu-ma a-na A-šùr-na-da (28) dí-na-šu-ma lu-ub-lam ù a-na-[ku] (29) [DUB]-pá-am ša ku-nu-uk a-bi<sub>4</sub>-kà x x x.

45. The pertinent passage (lines 3-18) runs as follows: “As to the 2 minas of silver, its nishátum-tax added, its šaddu’utum-tax paid for, which Su’ejja gave to Idi-ilum, son of Ṭab-ilī, and which was sent to the City for purchases, and for which the owner was made known—I am the owner. I have in my possession a certified tablet with Su’ejja’s seal, stating that the silver belongs to me. Further, a našpartum with Su’ejja’s seal has been written for Idi-ilum, and Ikuppi-Aššur brings it to you. Therein is stated that I am the owner.”
46. Another clear example is L 29-623, where “a tablet, a našpartum, with my seal” in which it is stated that a certain claim has been satisfied, is entrusted to a neutral person who will probably bring the tablet to another town where it will be determined whether the debt has in fact been paid to the representatives of the creditor; however, “if he has not paid the money to my representatives in accordance with the agreed settlement, a message from my agent will come to me and Ṭāb-šilli-Aššur must release the našpartum to me, and my tablets will then belong to me.” For some earlier remarks on the question of the meaning of this term see J. Lewy, *Or NS 29* (1960), p. 40, n. 6.
47. L 29-573; the text was discussed already by J. Lewy in *JAOS 78*, 100-101, and he gave a reconstruction of the entire sequence of events referred to in it and the other texts which appear to belong with it; I do not accept that reconstruction, however; see *OACC*, pp. 132-41 for a presentation of my arguments.
48. The phrase is *lu etallāti*.
49. It is indeed surprising that the letter was found unopened, and it should be pointed out that another royal letter, now in Edinburgh, 1909-585, was likewise not opened in antiquity.
50. (14) DUB-pí tù-kà-al (25) ša a-na e-ta-lu-tí-kà (26) a-na ma-la DUB-pì-a ta-ša-bu-tù.
51. See for example *BIN 4:147* (EL 285): “If A does not produce either a certified tablet or witnesses (as proof) against B, A will pay three times this amount of money to B.”
52. This is the conclusion drawn by Garelli, *RA 58* (1964), p. 128, on the basis of a comparison between the texts *VAT 13458* and *Sch. 22*. The two modern dictionaries do not treat this word in an adequate way.
53. For an Old Assyrian example of a thumb-nail print see *ATHE 75* with fig. 25.
54. Nos. 506, 507, and 508 in *Moortgat, Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*.
55. See for instance the many seals of Zimrilim, king of Mari, published in A. Parrot, *Mission archéologique de Mari II/3*, pp. 162-67.
56. *ICK 1:12b*, 33-34.
57. Cf. N. Özgüç in T. Özgüç, *Kültepe 1949*, p. 230.
58. Cf. *Moortgat, Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel*, seal 506.
59. The correct name and patronymic can be established on the basis of the reading in *KTS 46a* and *CCT 4:13a*, 33, where we find the full name. In the notes to this seal in *ICK 2*, p. 60, the reading is given as *I-dí-Sú-in mēr Šu-li*, which is not in accordance with the copy. The same seal is found on *KTBI 9*, but there is no *Idi-Suen* in that text, and the inscription cannot be read on the photograph. See fig. 7.
60. See *Ka 82 seal B* (*KTS 45a*), used by Dadaja, son of Aššur-imitti, but according to its legend belonging to his brother *Ilī-šadue*; cf. my *OACP*, p. 18, n. 7. *Hurašānum*, son of *Šu-Anum*, may have a seal with the legend *Amur-ilī, son of Šu-Anum*: *TC 3:259*, seal 58. *Kura*, son of *Zutija*, uses a seal with the legend *Aššur-dan, son of Zutija*: *BIN 4:161*, seal on pl. 82a. See also the article by L. Matouš, “Zur Benutzung des gemeinsamen Siegels im ‘kappadokischen’ Verpflichtungsscheine I 453,” *Bagh. Mitt. 7*, (1974), pp. 119-23. Matouš concludes that the two brothers *Aššur-rabi* and *Wardum*, sons of a certain *Laqep*, make use of the same seal at the same time.

61. See Garelli, AC, pp. 31-43, where the entire discussion has been summarized.
62. See Kienast in ATHE, p. 99. See also TC 3:252 and 253; BIN 4:208 records a loan transaction between Anatolians, but the three witnesses may all be Assyrians, and there are only three sealings.
63. See N. Özgüç, Level 1b, plates 17 and 18, and description on page 67.
64. Cf. seal 77 in TC 3, which occurs on TC 3:246 and on BIN 4:209; the witnesses to TC 3:246 are Puzur-Aššur, Idī-Kūbum, Maruru, and his mother Šāt-Ištar; in BIN 4:209 we find Ennam-Aššur, son of Haba, Tibula, Šiwašmi, and Kukran. Seal 91 in TC 3 is found on TC 3:239 where we have the witnesses: Atata, Mezi, Šarmama, Nini; and on TC 3:254 where we find Kura, Tarhuala, Hištahšu, Lulu, Išpunuman, and Azuwilka.
65. See N. Özgüç, Anatolian Group, fig. 45, for the seal with his name; on BIN 4:206 he makes use of a different seal.
66. (50) 1 ku-nu-ku-um ša I-dí-Ištar DUMU A-šur-na-da (51) i-na bu-ul-ṭí-šu-ma 4 (?) um-me-a-nu-ú (52) ik-nu-ku-ma ip-qi-du-nim ku-nu-ku-um (53) ša <sup>d</sup>UTU-TAB.BA-i i-na ku-nu-uk (54) 3 ma-ri um-me-a-nim pá-aq-dam. I am indebted to Dr. V. Crawford at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York who permitted me to study and make use of the unpublished Old Assyrian tablets in the museum.
67. The text is perhaps not entirely clear because of a slightly confusing choice of words; first we are told that “the tablets, a tamalakkum- and a huršīānum-container under the seal of Dadaja” have been deposited, but when this list is repeated later the wording is: “his tablets, his huršīānum-container, and his seal.”
68. For a discussion of these questions I refer to the brief comment in my article “The City and the King,” in the report of the XIX Rencontre, Le palais et la royauté (Paris, 1974), 297. For a fuller treatment see OACC, pp. 153-54 and 175-79.
69. Eisser, Festschrift Koschaker, p. 99, noted that the then-known verdicts issued by a colony were sealed by seven different seals, and he concluded that “der kárum in seiner rechtsprechenden Tätigkeit durch je sieben Männer vertreten war.” The suggested parallelism with the Sumerian texts which mention general citizen assemblies among the gods and a special council of seven “law-making gods,” for which one may see Th. Jacobsen, ZA 52 (1957), pp. 100-02, cannot be taken seriously. EL 274, 277, and 278 carry seven sealings, but ICK 1:26a, a verdict of the Purušhaddum colony, has only three different seals.
70. Again I must refer to OACC, pp. 333-53.

# Typology of Mesopotamian Seal Inscriptions

by

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## Introductory Remarks

With the cooperation of several Oriental Institute philologists and archaeologists, I organized a research seminar on Mesopotamian sigillography in the spring of 1961 which lasted the whole term. The aim of the seminar was to discuss sigillography in its various aspects, with special emphasis on three points: 1) typological organization of all materials, inscriptional and iconographic; 2) relation of the seal inscription to the seal iconography; and 3) relation of the seal inscription to the tablet. My major contribution to the seminar of 1961 was entitled "Typology of Seal Inscriptions."

When McGuire Gibson asked me to discuss the same subject at the Symposium of 1975, I hesitated to accept his invitation because several previous commitments were preventing me from bringing it up to date. Nevertheless, I acceded to his request when we both realized that the paper—preliminary as it might be—would fill an important lacuna in the field of Mesopotamian sigillography.

The 1961 Chart of Typology of Seal Inscriptions was marked "Preliminary Draft." The chart published here, though it contains a number of corrections and additions, bears the same warning.

In preparation for the chart about one thousand entries were collected with the helpful assistance of Miss Helen Caruso, a former student at the University of Chicago. The number of occurrences for each type or sub-type is based on these collected examples. An x in the chart indicates an indefinite number of occurrences, in an area or period which was not studied in detail.

The entries were excerpted mainly from large seal publications and my folders of royal inscriptions. There was a definite stress on early periods. Later periods and publications of cuneiform texts bearing seal impressions received much less attention.

The chart contains thirty-one main types. The order of types is intended to be chronological. Under each main type, all important sub-types are listed, as far as known to me. Several less important sub-types are at times listed under one sub-type. In all cases, it was impossible to be either complete or consistent.

Due to space limitations, the chart entries are cited without reference to original publications. Some important bibliographical information is given below in notes and discussions.

Lower-case transliterations, such as arád, are used for Sumerian, and capitals, such as ARÁD, for Sumerian logograms in Akkadian. However, it must be understood that lower-case transliterations in sub-types which refer to both Akkadian and Sumerian entries stand for both Sumerian and Akkadian.

My terminological usage of “title” (including “epithet”) with royal and official names, “attribute” (including “epithet”) with divine names, and “profession” (including “occupation”) with other names may not be consistent.

Rare but important Sumerian and Akkadian passages appear with a translation in the chart. Often repeated words and phrases as well as abbreviations which occur in the chart are given in the following list:

A	son
ama	mother
a-mu(-na)-ru, in-na(-an)-ba, iqīš	he gave, donated
arád	slave
attrib.	attribute
dam	wife
DN	divine name
dub-sar	scribe
dumu	child, son
dumu-SAL	daughter
fam. rel.	family relationship
FN	feminine name
gemé	slave girl
GN	geographical name
mu-na-dím	he built
NA <sub>4</sub> .KIŠIB	seal
narâm	beloved of . . .
níg-tuku, ní-te, pālihu	reverent
nin	queen
nin <sub>9</sub>	sister
ON	official's name
PN	personal name, mainly masculine
prof.	profession
RN	royal name
sag	slave
ša, šat	of . . .
šākin kunukki	user of the seal
šeš	brother
šubur	slave

#### Brief Notes to Chart

Type I: “City” Seals. Symbolic representations were found on bullae (jar sealings) published in UE 3, pls. 21-23 and discussed by Jacobsen in ZA 52 (1957), p. 109 under the heading “collective seals.” Their function is unknown.

Type II: "Strange" Seals. Inscriptions on bullae, mostly fragmentary, are found scattered through UE 3, pls. 1, 2, 20, 23 and 24; also UET 2, no. 1. Two large texts are UE 3, no. 431 and UET 2, no. 1. The writing, language, and function of these seals are a mystery to me.

Type XVI-XVIII and XXVII: All entries in Types XVI-XVIII are represented by seals of earlier periods, with the exception of a few Middle Babylonian seals, for which see below. The terms arád-da-ni and arád-zu appear always at the end of the inscription in the subject case and in apposition to the PN. The construction "PN, his/your slave" is regularly understood by others as a predicate "PN is his/your slave."

By contrast, all entries in Type XXVII: Prayers, are late, mostly Middle Babylonian. The terms arád-da-ni, arád-zu (and many variants) are used quite regularly with the qualifying adjective "reverent" (níg-tuku, ní-te, pālihu). The phrase refers to the PN in the appositional object case ("may DN give life to PN, his/your reverent slave" or "may DN protect PN, his/your reverent slave") or subject case ("may PN, his/your reverent slave, receive joy"). Syntactically, the phrase "his/your reverent slave" can appear in different positions, not only at the end of the inscription.

Since several characteristics of the seals of Type XXVII are apparent in the Middle Babylonian seals now listed under XVI and XVII, it may be best to interpret Middle Babylonian seals as containing an unexpressed but sub-intended prayer, and consequently to relegate them to Type XXVII.

Type XX: Votive Seals. Discussed by B. L. Goff, "The Role of Amulets in Mesopotamian Ritual Texts," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 19 (1956), pp. 1-39, esp. pp. 35ff.

The entries represent standard perforated seals, with the following exceptions:

- 1) Weissbach, Bab. Misc. p. 16, a lapis lazuli prism (Stange, "bar") of the king Marduk-zakir-shumi, 20 cm. long.
- 2) Weissbach, Bab. Misc., p. 17, a lapis lazuli prism (or bar) of the king Esarhaddon, 12 cm. long.
- 3) RT 24, pp. 25f., a perforated lapis lazuli prism (vierkantige Stange) of a certain Nabu-apla-iddina.
- 4) MAOG 3 1/2, p. 32, an unperforated amethyst cylinder.
- 5) RA 16, p. 123 = 19, p. 86, an inscription dealing with a donation of a field, which cites the text of a votive seal attached to the neck of a divinity.

Type XXI: Office Seals. These seals were collected and/or discussed by Sollberger, *JCS* 19 (1965), p. 29, esp. notes 10 and 11. Cf. also M. Lambert, *JA* 1971, p. 217ff. J. Franke, in this volume, calls them "Presentation Seals."

Type XXIII: Burgul Seals. Discussed by J. Renger in this volume.

Type XXV: User of the Seal. The expression šākin kunukki (annf) was translated as "the bearer of (this) seal" by Oppenheim in *Porada, Corpus*, p. 176 (no. 571) and "le propriétaire du sceau," "le détenteur du sceau," or "celui qui est muni de (ce) sceau" by Limet, *Les légendes des sceaux cassites* (Brussels, 1971), pp. 35, 82, 93, and elsewhere. Other possibilities are discussed by Goff, *op. cit.*, pp. 33f. My tentative translation "user of the seal" is based on the rare meaning of šakānu "verwenden," noted in von Soden, *AHw.*, pp. 1135b and 1138a.

Type XXVII: Prayers. See note on XVI-XVIII and XXVII. Owing to innumerable variations, especially in the order of individual parts, a full typological evaluation of prayers is almost impossible to achieve.

Type XXVIII: Amulets. Goff, *op. cit.*, pp. 18, 24-30 discusses several texts (incantations, rituals) in which the seal (kunukku), made of certain stones, colors, etc., plays an important role. None of the extant examples

of amulets known to me is a standard perforated seal. Literature on amulets has been collected by C. Frank, MAOG 14/2, pp. 4-15 and Oppenheim in Porada, Corpus, p. 178. Note the following:

- 1) PBS 14 1088, a clay cylinder, 19 x 11 mm.
- 2) PBS 14 1089, a clay cylinder, 19 x 11 mm.
- 3) Delaporte, Catalogue Louvre 2, p. 157 A 602, a fragment of agate, 31 x 32 mm.
- 4) Porada, Corpus, no. 583, a marble cylinder, 20 x 12 mm.
- 5) Porada, Corpus, no. 587, a jasper cylinder, 25.5 x 11.5 mm.
- 6) Bab. 3, p. 11, a flask-shaped chalcedony pendant, 2 x 1.5 inches.
- 7) De Clercq, Collection 1 253, a jasper cylinder, 36 x 13 mm.

Type XXIX: State Seals and Type XXX: Temple Seals. My collection of state and temple seals is doubtless incomplete and each seal has to be studied carefully in respect to its form, function, and typology.

The relation of state seals to royal seals (listed in the chart under various types) remains to be investigated.

Formally, the seal NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB šip-ri-e-ti šá LUGAL, “the royal seal of authority” is an eight-sided prism. See Frankfort, Cylinder Seals, p. 14 and pl. 36k.

The following four royal seal inscriptions (not listed in XXIX: State Seals) are known to me from citations in royal inscriptions:

- 1) Budge, AKA, pp. 14-16 (twice), a lapis lazuli seal of Tukulti-Ninurta I (1244-1208 B.C.), with a curse.
- 2) KAV 94 + 117, a seal of Adad-nirari III (810-783 B.C.).
- 3) Ebeling, Stiftungen, p. 1 (= Ebeling, Parfümerez., pl. 27), a seal of Sennacherib (704-681 B.C.).
- 4) Wiseman, Treaties, p. 29, a seal of Sennacherib. For the actual sealing, see p. 16.

Type XXX: Temple Seals. Seals offered ex-voto to the temple by individuals (Type XX) could and were being used by the temple in the legal function and thus became XXX: Temple Seals. The best example of such seals is the votive seal of Esarhaddon (680-669 B.C.) offered to Marduk, considered as “the property of (the temple household of) Marduk,” and used as “the seal of Adad of Esagila” (cited in XX, XXIV, and XXX).

The first two entries under XXX: Temple Seals (Wiseman, Treaties, p. 15, seals a and b) are seal impressions; the third one (Weissbach, Bab. Misc., p. 17) is a prism. The four entries noted under NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB DN’s are derived from citations in the royal inscriptions or related sources:

- 1) NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB<sup>d</sup> A-šur<sub>4</sub> LUGAL DINGIR.MEŠ EN KUR.KUR ša la šu-un-ni-[e] NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB NUN-e GAL-e AD DINGIR.MEŠ ša la pa-qa-ri “Seal of Aššur, king of the gods, lord of the lands, not to be altered, seal of the great prince, father of the gods, not to be disputed” (Wiseman, Treaties, p. 29).
- 2) NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB<sup>d</sup> A-šur<sub>4</sub> ù<sup>d</sup> Nin-urta NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB DINGIR r[u-bi-e . . . ] ša l[a pa-qa-ri] “Seal of Aššur and Ninurta, seal of the god, the prince, [. . .] not to be disputed” (KAV 94 + 117).
- 3) NA<sub>4</sub>.KI[ŠIB<sup>d</sup>] A-šur<sub>4</sub> LUGAL DINGIR.MEŠ NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB DINGIR ru-bi-e ša la pa-qa-ri “Seal of Aššur, king of the gods, seal of the god, the prince, not to be disputed” (Ebeling, Stiftungen, p. 1 = Ebeling, Parfümerez., pl. 27).
- 4) NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB<sup>d</sup> Na-na-a u<sup>d</sup> A.É šá la pa-qa-ru “Seal of Nanaya and Mâr-bîti, not to be disputed” (VAS 1 36 iv 13).

(sissiktu, qannu) leave markings on the document just as the seals do, but the markings are not sufficiently distinctive but symbolic and identify the user of the device not directly but symbolically. Other devices, such as brick stamps and branding irons, identify the user directly by certain distinctive markings, but they are used not on documents but on bricks and animals, respectively.

Throughout the long span of Mesopotamian history are found seals bearing iconographic representations and no inscription. Such representations reproduce distinctive markings on documents and thus share the main characteristics of seals with both inscriptions and iconographic representations and of seals with inscriptions only.

The major question is how the three points in the definition of the seal fit the thirty-one types of seal inscriptions in the chart.

All thirty-one types bear distinctive markings, either in the form of writing or iconographic representation, or both, and are and can be used on documents, with the following possible exceptions:

As stated above in notes to seals of Types I and II, nothing much is known about the writing, symbolization, language, and function of these seals. They all have distinctive signs of writing or symbolization and since they were found used on bullae the identifying purpose of these seals is strongly suggested.

The function and structure of Type XX: Votive Seals is the same as those of other kinds of objects offered ex-voto to the divinity, such as statuettes, vases, weapons, tools, etc. The aim of all votive offerings is expressed best in the Latin *do ut des*. At least one Ur III votive seal (CT 21 9, 89131) bears a name just as many other votive objects do (see Gelb in Names 4 [1956], pp. 65-69).

In addition, it should be noted that certain votive seals are much larger than standard seals (the seal of Marduk-zakir-shumi being 20 cm. long and that of Esarhaddon being 12 cm. long) and could be worn on a necklace as the god's ornament (seal of Marduk-zakir-shumi and a reference to a seal inscription attached to a donation of land to a divinity, RA 16, p. 123 and 19, p. 86).

The main characteristic of the votive seals is that while they identified the donor of the seal, they were not used by the donor but by the divinity to whom they were offered. Certain seals can be used for purely ornamental purposes but nothing would prevent the temple from employing them for identifying and legal purposes. Such seals fit the function of Type XXX: Temple Seals.

Type XXVIII: Amulets include several examples of unperforated cylinders bearing stereotyped incantations. I know of no examples of the use of amulet seals on documents. Thus such amulets share the form with seals proper, but their function is not legal, identifying, but magical.

Seals listing divinities and nothing else (III: DN's, also some under XXIII: Burgul Seals and XXX: Temple Seals) and prayers without names (XXVII: Prayers) are all used on documents and may identify the user of the seal with the help of differentiating iconographic representations.

There are, however, mass-produced seals in the Old Babylonian Period which name the same pair of divinities, Shamash and Aya, and bear almost identical iconographic representations. The legal, identifying function of these seals is apparently limited to some symbolic action.

The answer to the question of how the three points in the definition of the seal fit the thirty-one types of seal inscriptions can be stated thus: the definition can be applied one way or another to all types, with the exception of the ornamental-votive seals (under Type XX) and the magical amulets (Type XXVII).



## 2. The Meaning of arád/gemé

The following discussion affects Types XII-XVIII and scattered occurrences in XIX, XXI, XXII, XXIV, XXV, and XXVII which use the terms arád and gemé (and the like), as well as scattered occurrences in XXVII which contain prayers and list DN's with arád/gemé not occurring but implied.

The Sumerian terms arád and gemé and the corresponding Akkadian wardum and amtum are generally translated as "servant" and "servant girl" ("maid"), reflecting—I assume—the Western translations of the Hebrew terms עֶבֶד and שִׁמְוֹת of the Old Testament. My translation as "slave" and "slave girl" reflects the standard meaning of all these terms when they are used for chattel property, and I see no reason to adjust the translations to situations when individuals so termed are not *de jure* chattel slaves. In the eyes of the high official all his dependents are slaves, just as the same official is "slave of the king" and the king himself is "slave of a god."

The translation "slave" for arád is in agreement with the other terms for "slave," namely sag and šubur, used on several seals of Type XXVII: Prayers.

My reading arád (not ir) conforms with the conclusions reached in a long article dealing with the terminology pertaining to slavery and serfdom, soon to be published.

With the Sumerian pronominal suffix -(a)ni, "his, her," arád-da-ni means "his/her slave" and gemé-ni "his/her slave girl." With the Sumerian suffix -zu, "your," arád-zu means "your slave" and gemé-zu "your slave girl."

Theoretically it is possible that the Sumerian arád-zu and gemé-zu are used as Sumerograms ARÁD.ZU and GEMÉ.ZU for waradka, waradki "your slave" and amatka, amatki "your slave girl" in Akkadian contexts. However, the occurrence (in seals of Type XVI) of the forms ARÁD-za (Ward, Cylinder Seals, fig. 48 = A. 1167, collated) and GEMÉ-za (ibid., fig. 217) for Akkadian warassa "her slave" and amassa "her slave girl" (conforming to the Sumerian arád-da-ni and gemé-ni) proves the existence of the "his/her slave/slave girl" type in Akkadian, casting doubt upon the use of the second Sumerian type "your slave/slave girl" in Akkadian.

The main question is not the English translation of the terms arád, gemé (and similarly in other languages), but the exact meaning of the terms when they are used to express the relationship between the owner of the seal and a divinity (or temple) or the owner and a higher official (including the king). Does the use of the term arád in the phrase PN (the owner of the seal) arád DN (or the like) imply piety, personal relationship between the owner of the seal and the divinity, or does it mean that the owner of the seal is employed by or is in the service of the temple household of a particular divinity? Similarly, does the phrase PN arád ON/RN (or the like) express some vague kind of allegiance, loyalty, dependence on the part of the owner of the seal towards the ON or RN, or does it mean that the owner of the seal was in the employment or service of the official or the crown?

The answers to these questions are not easy in each and every case.

Joseph Krausz, *Die Götternamen in den babylonischen Siegelcylinderlegenden* (Leipzig, 1911), pp. 3ff., and Arno Poebel, BE 6/2, p. 53, suggested that the phrase PN arád DN expresses some kind of piety on the part of the owner of the seal, and that the particular DN is the personal god of the seal owner. Poebel noted in favor of his suggestion a) the fact that the same DN's are frequently named in many different seal inscriptions and b) that a farmer calls himself "slave of (the god of grain) Ašnan [ŠE.TIR]" in his seal, BE 6/2 no. 29. In addition, several more arguments can be cited in favor of this interpretation. c) A number of DN's are cited in the seals, but no corresponding temples are known to exist. This is especially true of the Kassite seals listed under XXVII: Prayers. d) A seal can list several DN's, such as

arád DN DN-2 DN-3 ù DN-4 (Type XII) or DN DN-2, PN dumu PN-2, arád PN-3 (Type XIV). More examples are found under XXVII: Prayers. e) A person calls himself a slave and worshiper of two divinities (XII), and the king of Hana calls himself slave and beloved of two divinities (XXII). The expression of piety is best exemplified by the Kassite seals of the Type XXVII: Prayers, where the terms for slaves are regularly accompanied by the expression “reverent” (nig-tuku, ní-te, pālihu). f) The theophoric element in the name of the owner of the seal is often the same as the name of the DN in the phrase PN arád DN. This point is the opposite of that point in the next interpretation.

On the other hand, Thorkild Jacobsen apud Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, pp. 9f. proposed that the term arád has nothing to do with the expression of piety, but implies simply that the owner of the seal was in service of a particular temple. In favor of this interpretation, he noted that the theophoric element in the name of the owner of the seal is often different from the name of the DN in the phrase PN arád DN. This point is the opposite of point f) in the previous interpretation.

While I can offer only one point, namely the fact that a burgul seal lists two divinities who appear also as parties in a contract (BE 6/2, p. 52 and no. 66 = HG 4 979), in support of Jacobsen’s interpretation, I have always favored it, mainly, I suppose, because I could see little difference in the meaning of arád between the expression PN arád DN, on the one hand, and PN arád RN/ON on the other. The meaning of the latter can be best deduced from the XXI: Office Seals in which the individual who receives the seal from a higher authority is called arád “slave.”

Nevertheless, it is imprudent to be apodictic on this point, as we learn from an Old Babylonian seal which shows that both interpretations are possible. The pertinent seal (Von der Osten, Newell, no. 263) reads PN dumu PN-2, gudu <sup>d</sup>INNIN, arád É-a “PN son of PN-2, gudu-‘priest’ (in the temple household) of Ištar, the slave of Ea.”

A further possibility to consider is that the meaning of arád may not be the same in different periods of its attestation. It is possible, perhaps even probable, that the use of the term arád denoted actual service in the crown, official, and temple households in earlier periods (e.g., in Sargonic and Ur III), while it expressed some kind of piety, devotion in later periods (e.g., in Kassite).

**Chart of Typology of Seal Inscriptions \***  
(Preliminary draft of 1961, revised in 1975)

	ED I/II	ED III	Sarg.	Ur III	OB	MB	NB+	OA	MA	NA
I. "City" Seals	x									
II. "Strange" Seals	x									
III. DN's only										
DN	1		3	2	3			2		
DN attrib.				1	8	1				
DN dumu DN-2					5					
DN attrib. dumu DN-2				1						
DN dumu DN-2 attrib.					3					
DN (ù) DN-2 (more in XXIII)				3	x			7		
IV. PN's only	3	7	34	4	1	Alal. 1	2	1	1	1
V. PN + family relationships										
PN dumu PN-2		3	22	37	7	2	1	13		
FN dumu-SAL PN			1	2						
FN dumu-SAL PN, dam PN-2				2						
FN dam PN		1		3						
PN šeš PN-2				1						
FN nin-na-ni PN			1							
PN, FN dam PN									1	

\* See p. 126 for abbreviations of periods and locations used in this chart.

## Chart of Typology of Seal Inscriptions (cont.)

	ED I/II	ED III	Sarg.	Ur III	OB	MB	NB+	OA	MA	NA
VI. PN + title/profession										
PN prof.	1	2	40	4						
RN/ON title		4	1							
ON/PN title/prof. of GN/DN/ON		4	10	2	3					
FN prof. of FN-2 (higher ranking)					1					
VII. PN + fam. rel. + title/prof.										
PN dumu PN-2, title/prof. of GN/DN/ON/RN	1	5	24	1	Mit. 1					
					1					
FN dumu-SAL PN, title/prof. (of DN)					2.					
FN ama PN, prof.				1						
PN šeš PN-2, prof. of lugal			1							
FN dam ON, title of GN	1									
VIII. PN + title/prof. + fam. rel.										
PN title/prof. of GN/DN dumu PN-2			10	15	2				1	
RN title, PN dumu-ni				1						
PN, PN-2 prof. dumu-ni				2						
RN title (or PN prof.), PN DUMU-su				2						
DUMU RN title, PN title of GN, FN prof. of DN										
DUMU.SAL-zu				1						
FN nin dam RN		1								
RN/PN title/prof. FN dam-ni		1	1	1						
IX. PN + title/prof. + fam. rel. + title/prof.										
PN title dumu PN-2 title			1	2	6				1	1

X. DN ± attrib., PN ± title ± fam. rel.

DN, PN dumu PN-2	1				
DN attrib., PN title		1	1	1	1
DN attrib., PN		1	1	1	
DN attrib., PN dumu PN-2			2		
DN attrib., ON title DUMU PN title					1
DN, RN title of GN	1				

XI. RN/ON ± fam. rel. + title, PN ± title/prof. ± fam. rel.

RN title, ON title of GN	1				
FN dumu RN, PN prof.	1				
RN title, PN title		2+	2		
ON title, PN title ± fam. rel.		2+	1		
RN title, PN prof.-ni		2+			
FN dumu-SAL lugal, PN prof.-ni		1			

XII. PN ± fam. rel. ± title/prof. + slave of DN

PN arád (or ARAD ša) DN	1	3	2	Alal. 2	
PN arád DN ù DN-2			2		
PN arád DN DN-2 DN-3 ù DN-4		1	1		
FN gemé DN		2			
PN dumu PN-2, arád (or ARAD ša) DN		4	25+	6	2
PN (prof.) dumu PN-2, arád (or ARAD ša) DN ù DN-2			4	8	1
FN DUMU.SAL PN, DAM PN-2 title ARAD DN DN-2				1	
PN DUMU PN-2, SAG.ARAD ša DN ù DN-2					1
PN dumu PN-2, gudu <sup>4</sup> INNIN arád É-a					1
FN dumu-SAL PN, gemé DN					4
FN dumu-SAL PN, gemé DN DN-2					1
PN arád DN, dumu PN-2					1
PN prof. arád DN		2			



XIV. DN ± attrib., PN + fam. rel. + slave of DN/RN				
DN DN-2, PN dumu PN-2, arád DN-3			2	
DN attrib., prayer, PN dumu PN-2, arád [DN-2 ù] DN-3 (also XXVII)				1
DN attrib., prayer, PN DUMU PN-2, ARÁD RN title (also XXVII)				1
<hr/>				
XV. RN title, PN + fam. rel. + slave of ON				Elam 1
RN LUGAL, PN DUMU PN-2, ARÁD ON				
<hr/>				
XVI. DN/RN/ON ± fam. rel. ± title/attrib., PN ± fam. rel. ± title/prof. + his slave				
PN, PN-2 prof. arád-da-ni	1			
FN dumu PN, PN-2 prof. arád-da-ni	1			
RN title, ON title dumu-ni, PN prof. arád-da-ni	1			
ON title, PN prof. arád-da-ni	1			
FN dumu-SAL lugal, FN-2 gemé-ni		1		
RN title, FN NIN <sub>9</sub> , PN title ARÁD-za ("her slave")	2			
FN e-na-at DN, FN-2 ša-at PN GEMÉ-za ("her slave girl")	1			
DN attrib., PN sag nig-tuku-bi ("his reverent slave") (see also XXVII)				1
DN attrib., PN? sag? nig-tuku-na ("his reverent slave"?) (see also XXVII)				1
<hr/>				
XVII. DN ± title/attrib., PN ± fam. rel. ± title/prof. + your slave				
DN (attrib.), PN title/prof. arád-zu	1	1	Dér 1 Ešn. 1	
DN attrib., PN arád nig-tuku-zu ("your reverent slave") (see also XXVII)				2
DN attrib., PN sag nig-tuku-zu ("your reverent slave")				4
DN attrib., PN dumu RN ME nig-tuku-zu				1





DN attrib., nam-ti-il RN title, PN title mu-na-dím (name of seal?)	1		
DN lugal-a-ni-ir PN in-na-an-ba	2		
DN attrib., PN title dumu PN-2, nam-ti-la-ni-šè nam-ti dam dumu-na-šè a-mu-na-ru	1		
DN lugal-a-ni nam-ti RN (title), PN title a-mu-na-ru	2	1	
DN attrib., PN title nam-ti-la-a-ni-šè a-mu-un-na-ru			1
a-na DN, PN prof. [A].MU.RU			1?
a-na DN attrib., a-na ba-la-at RN title, PN title i-qi-iš		Ešn. 1	
FN DUMU.SAL PN, a-na ba-la-ti-ša a-na DN i-qi-iš		Ešn. 1	
a-na DN attrib., RN (ik-ri-bi-šu iš-me-ma) a-na ba-la-ti-šu i-qi-iš			1
ana DN attrib., Marduk-zākir-šumi title ana balāt napšātēšu . . . , NA <sub>4</sub> .KIŠIB NA <sub>4</sub> .ZA.GIN . . . simat kišādišu ("as ornament of his neck") . . . iqīš			1
ana Marduk attrib., Esarhaddon title ana balātišu iqīš. NÍG.GA <sup>d</sup> AMAR.UTU, NA <sub>4</sub> .KIŠIB šá <sup>d</sup> IM šá É-sag-gil (also XXIV, XXX)			1
ana DN attrib., PN A PN-2, ana ZI.ME-šú BA-eš			1
NA <sub>4</sub> .KIŠIB NA <sub>4</sub> .ZA.GIN PN A-šú šá PN-2 a-na DIN ZI.MEŠ-šú . . . a-na DN . . . BA-eš			1
ana urruk ūmēšu . . . ana DN title iqīš. šá ina UGU NA <sub>4</sub> .KIŠIB šá ina NA <sub>4</sub> .GU ("necklace") šá DN			1

XXI. Office seals

RN title, ON title arád-da-mi-ir in-na-(an)-ba	20+	Elam 1
RN title, ON title arád ki-ág-gá-ni-ir in-na-an-ba		Ešn. 2
RN title, a-na PN (prof.) i-qi-iš		Ešn. 1
RN title, ana FN DAM-[šu iqīš]		Ešn. 1
DN title, RN title, a-na PN DUMU.NI-šu i-qi <sub>4</sub> -iš		Ešn. 1
RN title, PN DUMU.NI i-qi-iš		Ešn. 1



XXIV. Seal of PN

NA <sub>4</sub> .KIŠIB (and nothing else)					1
KIŠIB PN DUMU PN-2, ARÁD DN ù DN-2, KIŠIB annûm ša aššatîšu ša irrašî (also XII and XIX)	1 (prov.)				
(NA <sub>4</sub> ).KIŠIB PN † fam. rel. † title/prof.	Alal. 1	2	1	7+	3+
	Hitt. 1				
(NA <sub>4</sub> ).KIŠIB RN title		2			
NA <sub>4</sub> .KIŠIB PN title A PN-2 title, A PN-3 title					1
NA <sub>4</sub> .KIŠIB šip-ri-e-ti šá LUGAL (see XXIX)					1
NA <sub>4</sub> .KIŠIB NAM.MEŠ (see XXX)					1
NA <sub>4</sub> .KIŠIB DN's (see XXX)					5
Prayer DN, NA <sub>4</sub> .KIŠIB PN (DUMU PN-2) (also XXVII)		3			
Prayer DN ù DN-2, NA <sub>4</sub> .KIŠIB PN (also XXVII)		1			
Prayer DN, NA <sub>4</sub> .KIŠIB FN DAM PN (also XXVII)		1			
NA <sub>4</sub> PN KIŠIB PN-2					1
NA <sub>4</sub> .ZAGIN PN PN-2 PN-3 PN-4 PN-5 PN-6 PN-7					
DUB.SAR (also XIX, XXXI)				1	

XXV. User of the Seal

ša-ki-in NA <sub>4</sub> .KIŠIB an-ni-i prayer					3
ša-kin NA <sub>4</sub> .KIŠIB an-ni-i PN DUMU PN-2, prayer		1			
GAR NA <sub>4</sub> .KIŠIB.NE prayer		5			
NA <sub>4</sub> .KIŠIB.NE.GAR prayer		5			
	Nuzi 2				
DN attrib. prayer, NA <sub>4</sub> .KIŠIB.NE.GAR		2			
PN DUMU PN-2, title of DN, GAR NA <sub>4</sub> .KIŠIB an-ni-i prayer ARÁD pālih(NÍ.TE) DN ù DN-2 (also XII)			1		
Prayer ša-ki-šu li-bur			1		
i-na INIM DN ša-kin-šu li-bur (cf. XXXI)				2	
i-na INIM DN u DN-2 GAR-šu TI liš-be, KIŠIB PN A PN-2 prof.					1



DN attrib. PN/FN ARÁD/GEMÉ pālih-ka/ki/šu/ša (also pālihtaki) ("your/his/her reverent slave") prayer 8  
 PN dumu PN-2 prayer 5  
 PN dumu PN-2 arád (or ARÁD ša) DN ü DN-2 prayer (also XII) 2  
 šá PN DUMU PN-2 prayer (also XXV) 2  
 More prayers in XXIV and XXV

XXVIII. Amulets

Incantations mostly on unperforated cylinders x

XXIX. State Seals

"Dynastic" Seal of Tabarna Hitt. x  
 "Dynastic" Seal of 'Abba-II, son of Šarra-II Alal. x  
 "Dynastic" Seal of Jaqarum and Azirum Ugar. x  
 NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB šip-ri-e-ti šá LUGAL (also XXIV) 1  
 ša<sup>d</sup> A-šir ša É a-lim ki (also XXXVI, XXX) 1

XXX. Temple Seals

ša<sup>d</sup> A-šir ša É a-lim<sup>ki</sup> (also XXVI, XXIX) 1  
 NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB NAM.MEŠ [šá] An-šár MAN DINGIR.MEŠ NAM.MEŠ (also XXIV) 1  
 ana Marduk attrib. Esarhaddon title ana balātišu iqīš. NÍG.GA<sup>d</sup>AMAR.UTU, NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB šá<sup>d</sup>IM šá É-sag-gil (also XX, XXIV) 1  
 NA<sub>4</sub>.KIŠIB DN's etc. (also XXIV) 4

XXXI. Misc.

- 1) [The violator of the contract?] ina awat DN's and RN's curse Elam 2
- 2) NA<sub>4</sub>.ZA.GIN PN PN-2 PN-3 PN-4 PN-5 PN-6 PN-7 DUB.SAR (also XIX, XXIV) 1
- 3) zi-ru-um ša PN ša PN-2? ša PN-3? 1

## Chart of Typology of Seal Inscriptions (cont.)

	ED I/II	ED III	Sarg.	Ur III	OB	MB	NB+	OA	MA	NA
4) RN title i-ti <sup>d</sup> Dagan					Mari 1					
5) ina INIM <sup>d</sup> MES u GAL DÙ.MEŠ (rab bānē) (cf. XXIV)									1	
6) A ("son of") PN curse?							1			
7) ana-ku RN MAN GAL (trilingual inscription)							1 (Pers.)			
8) RN titles, the violator of the inscription DN's curse										1

## ABBREVIATIONS:

ED	Early Dynastic	NA	Neo-Assyrian
Sarg.	Sargonic	Alal.	Alalakh
OB	Old Babylonian	Ešn.	Ešnunna
MB	Middle Babylonian	Hitt.	Hittite
NB+	Neo-Babylonian (and later)	Mit.	Mitanni
OA	Old Assyrian	prov.	Provincial
MA	Middle Assyrian		

## The Use of Seals on the Persepolis Fortification Tablets

by

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I have been contemplating the seal impressions on Persepolis tablets for about thirty-five years. In that time I have made some discoveries about the ways they were used, but I am still confused about many things. It is one of those cases in which if you are not confused you do not appreciate the problem. Nevertheless, I shall try to put emphasis on the things I know rather than on the things I am confused about.

Of the thirty thousand or more tablets found in Herzfeld's excavation of the fortification at the northeast end of the platform at Persepolis I have studied about 4500.<sup>1</sup> These tablets date from the thirteenth to the twenty-eighth year of Darius the Great (509-494 B.C.), but are not evenly distributed by year. About half of them are from the 22nd and 23rd years. They deal almost exclusively with administrative transfers of food commodities ranging from the transport of huge amounts down to the payment of a single day's ration to one person. There are many different types of text.

Thus far, I have distinguished 580 seals with two or more occurrences and I have assigned permanent numbers to 314 of them.<sup>2</sup> I have not tried to tally how many sealings there are with only one occurrence in the tablets I have studied.

Most of the tablets are rather small and have a flat left edge and a rounded right edge (E-2). Seals are impressed most commonly on the flat left edge, but are also impressed quite often on the reverse and on the upper and right edges.

The manner of using seals varies from one type of text to another. One usage is to impress the seal of the supplier of the commodity on the left edge and the seal of the recipient on the other available surfaces. This seems to be the most normal and comprehensible usage. There are two parties and two seals and the seals are distinguished by position. However, this usage, though frequent, is by no means predominant. When it is not employed we may ask why and sometimes there is an answer. For example, when the supplier is subordinate to the recipient, the supplier's seal need not be used. There are a number of texts recording the issuance at many different places of commodities for the king. Almost all carry one or two of the three royal seals, which are never used with any other type of text. For all commodities except flour and cattle they have only Seal 7 (E-3).<sup>3</sup> The flour texts have Seal 7 on the reverse and Seal 66 (E-4) on the left edge.<sup>4</sup> The cattle texts have only Seal 93 (E-5a-b).<sup>5</sup> I might mention that Seal 93 has the Elamite legend: "Cyrus the Anshanite, son of Teispes," and thus belonged originally to the grandfather of Cyrus the Great.

All of these texts name the local supplier, and some name other local officials; they never mention anyone else, except the king. It is clear that the seals are royal seals. But they must have been held by subordinates who used them on behalf of the king. The holder of Seal 66, used only with flour texts, is presumably the royal miller; if so, the texts mentioning flour apparently must be understood as implying that grain was

provided and that flour was made from it. The holder of Seal 7 evidently was in general charge of the royal food supply, excepting cattle; flour he received via the miller, everything else directly from the supplier. The holder of Seal 93 received cattle, which he tended, or slaughtered, or both.

The tablets were written at Persepolis after deliveries were made, on the basis of information provided by the carriers, and then the appropriate seal or seals were applied. Thus we can develop a clear picture of these transfers of commodities and of the related use of seals. There is, however, nothing to explain the basis of the acquisitions, whether as tax, by trade, or simply on demand. And I cannot explain why there are two similar texts with seals otherwise unknown<sup>6</sup> and two with no seals at all.<sup>7</sup>

In texts of the same type two women also acquire commodities. One is Artystone, wife of Darius.<sup>8</sup> The other, Irdabama, is known only from our texts;<sup>9</sup> she also must be a member of the royal family. Each woman has her own seal, and these seals, unlike the royal seals, appear also with other kinds of texts, chiefly with letters sent by the women.<sup>10</sup> These letters are brief and businesslike, after this fashion: "1000 quarts of wine are to be issued to Kamshabama, the accountant, from my estate at Kuknaka."<sup>11</sup> As for the letters in general, we find a very satisfactory situation: practically all the letters are impressed with the seal of the sender.

The striking fact about the letters (78 published) is that nearly two-thirds are sent by two officials: Pharnaces, who is the chief official of the economic administration (at least, as far as the fortification archive is concerned), and Zisshawish, the second in command. Some of the other senders are minor officials who may not have had occasion to send many letters. Some are important persons; most of their letters may have gone into other archives, which have not been recovered. The king sends no letters but two of the letters from Pharnaces, three from Zisshawish, and one from another person convey orders of the king.

During the period of our texts, both Pharnaces and Zisshawish change from one seal to another. In the case of Pharnaces the change is documented in two letters, PF 2067 and 2068, both dated year 22, third month, 16th day; the letters carry the notation: "The seal that formerly was mine has been replaced. Now the seal that has been applied to this tablet is mine."

The two seals of Pharnaces, Seal 9 and Seal 16 (E-6-7), are inscribed in Aramaic. The first says simply: "Pharnaces"; the second says: "Pharnaces, son of Arsames." This Arsames may be the grandfather of Darius. In view of the exalted position of Pharnaces, I think he probably is.

The first seal of Zisshawish (Seal 83, E-8) is uninscribed. The second (Seal 11, E-9), which he began to use in year 19, has every appearance of being a royal seal: It has a depiction of the king and an inscription with the name of Darius in Old Persian, Elamite, and Akkadian.

Pharnaces and Zisshawish, along with their seals, appear in various other kinds of texts, but chiefly in texts which record their own daily salary payments. Pharnaces gets 180 quarts of flour per day, whereas the average workman gets one quart; in addition he gets 90 quarts of wine and two sheep. Zisshawish gets lesser amounts. The payments are made at many different places, and not very often at any one place. From this we may conclude that our texts record payments in the field, when the officials were traveling, and seldom if ever payments at home. The records of payments at home may have gone to a different archive or may have been written in Aramaic on perishable material.

Pharnaces and Zisshawish predominate in texts of this type even more than in the letters: Pharnaces occurs 41 times, Zisshawish 19 times, the next most frequent official only four times. Part of the reason for their predominance may be that their duties required much travel. However, officials away from home might not receive all their rations on the road but might prefer some payments made at home, where they could be more readily disposed of. After all, if you're getting 180 quarts of flour every day you can't just let it pile up indefinitely.



Two such texts with other recipients tell an interesting story. An unpublished text concerns a woman described as “the wife of Mardonius, a daughter of the king.” Strangely, it does not give her name. According to Herodotus her name was Artazostra. The other text, PF 688, concerns Gobryas (E-10, no seal number given as yet), a general of Darius and, according to Herodotus, the father of Mardonius. Artazostra, in year 23, 12th month, receives payment for four days, one for a place called Kurdushum, one for Bessitme, and two for Liduma. Gobryas, in the same year and month, receives three payments, one for Bessitme and two for Liduma. It seems clear that Gobryas met his daughter-in-law at Bessitme and traveled with her to Liduma. They were on the main road from Susa, moving toward Persepolis. The time is about six years before Mardonius became commander of the Persian army.

Gobryas was one of the “helpers” named in the inscriptions of Darius.<sup>12</sup> Two other “helpers,” Irdumartiya and Aspathines, occur with their seals as recipients in texts of this type. Both men also appear with the same seals as senders of fortification letters and, a few years later, as senders of letters in the treasury archive.<sup>13</sup>

In these texts with recipients other than Pharnaces and Zisshawish the seal of the recipient is normally impressed on the reverse, while the seal of the supplier is impressed on the left edge. But the seals of Pharnaces and Zisshawish are never accompanied by another seal, presumably because all of the suppliers were under the authority of Pharnaces and Zisshawish.

The seals discussed so far are not limited geographically. Now I will deal with three seals each of which predominates in one of the three main areas with which the fortification texts are concerned (fig. 1). First is the Persepolis area. Second is the Kamfiruz area, which extends about 30 miles NNW, along the Kur River; the main road to Susa runs through this area and then turns through a pass and runs through Fahliyan, the third area. The seals, Seal 1, Seal 3, and Seal 4 (E-11-12, F-1) are the three most frequent ones, with a combined total of 351 occurrences. These seals, with only two exceptions, are never used with another seal; presumably the seal of the supplier is not applied for the usual reason—the supplier is subordinate to the jurisdiction involved. The jurisdictions which employ the three seals are particularly concerned with rations for people and animals: 90% of the texts are concerned with such rations.

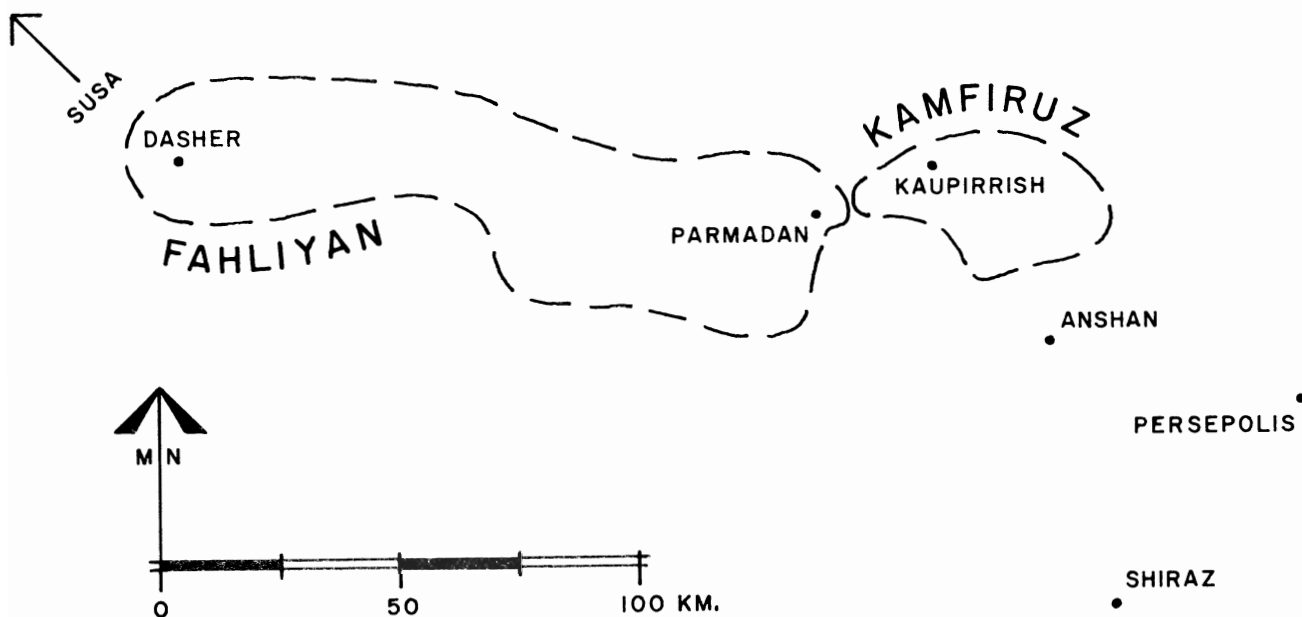


Figure 1. Sketch map showing areas mentioned in the sealed Persepolis tablets.

In the Persepolis area Seal 1 is concerned almost exclusively with rations for workers. It occurs at Shiraz, Pasargadae, and Niriz, and at eighteen other places either within the triangle defined by those three points or somewhat north of it. It occurs at Persepolis only three times, for small groups (five or six goldsmiths, seven treasurers). Persepolis is rarely mentioned in any ration texts. But Seal 1 occurs twenty times at a place called Matezzish, with groups of up to 700 workers. Evidence indicates that Matezzish was immediately adjacent to Persepolis, and I presume that most of the workers receiving their rations at Matezzish actually worked at Persepolis.

Seal 1 belonged successively to two officials: Karkish, in the years 15 to 19, and Shuddayauda, in the years 20 to 26. Each had the title "chief of workers," and their main functions were the assignment of workers and the determination of their rations. This seal is used more or less simultaneously for 21 places, some far apart. It would not be possible for a scribe to be present with the seal whenever and wherever a payment was made. So there is a problem about where the texts were written. Did a scribe travel around and at each place record all the payments made since his last visit? Or did he sit in his office, presumably at or near Persepolis, and write the texts on the basis of information brought by the couriers? I know of no direct evidence for solving the problem. But I think a crucial point is the security of the seal. Since it did, in effect, represent the signature of the official to whom it pertained, there was a possibility of improper use. However, I doubt that there was much scope for misuse, since the seal was used and recognized only for certain restricted purposes. The real danger lay in the risk of loss if it left the office. That could be very annoying.

During World War II, I sometimes kept a colonel's chair warm overnight. Messages would come in, already enciphered, for transmission to a radio operator. This required the colonel's signature, theoretically. But the colonel was home asleep and the messages had to go through. So I stamped them with the colonel's stamp and signed my name. Thus Top Secret Highest Priority messages from the Pentagon to COMGENTPAC went on their way over the signature of a Second Lieutenant. The absolutely essential thing I had to remember was to put the colonel's stamp back exactly where I got it.

So I suspect the tablets were inscribed in a central office, and Seal 1 never left that office. Since it continued to be used for at least twelve years, the security in that office is rather impressive.

Seal 1 does not occur at all the places in its area. At the places at which it does occur it is not the only seal used. So there are other jurisdictions in the area; but there is none of comparable importance. Usually the work groups in Seal 1 texts are not qualified as to occupation. When they are qualified they are most commonly called "treasurers," i.e., persons working for the treasury. This does not mean that most of them had technical skills, as we may see from certain letters which concern the transfer of "treasurers" at various places to become stonemasons at Persepolis. Other qualifications which occur, such as goldsmiths and copiers of texts, may apply to "treasurers" who did have technical skills.

A somewhat comparable seal, Seal 32, is used with texts concerning places south and east of the Seal 1 area. Here Shuddayauda occurs as assigner and apportioner of workers, just as with Seal 1. But six other persons also appear in one or the other of these roles. This despite the fact that Seal 32 carries the inscription: "Shuddayauda, son of Haturdada," and thus is his personal seal. I assume that the other persons are subordinate to Shuddayauda. Nevertheless, his authority at the Seal 32 places seems to be more remote than his authority in the Seal 1 area. His first appearance with Seal 32 is half a year earlier than his first appearance with Seal 1. So he had authority in this area first, and he retained it after he took over from Karkish the jurisdiction represented by Seal 1.

I should mention that Karkish and Shuddayauda were not confined to this jurisdiction. It seems that economic activities were proliferating faster than administrators could be trained, and a competent administrator necessarily wore more than one hat.

The similarities in the usage of Seals 1, 3, and 4 are more important than the differences. Yet there are differences. In the case of Seal 3, in the Kamfiruz area, it is not possible to discover the name of the official in charge. One may say it is not necessary to name the official when his seal identifies him; yet in the case of Seals 1 and 4 the official nearly always is named. Seal 3 occurs in more kinds of texts than the other two seals: for example, it is often involved in the feeding of animals (poultry, horses, and camels), while the other two seals are not; evidently, since Kamfiruz is much smaller than the other two areas, the jurisdiction could have wider functions within its area. There are very few places in Kamfiruz at which Seal 3 does not occur, and none of these places occurs more than four times.

Seal 3 was used from year 18 to year 28. There is an associated seal, Seal 30, with far fewer occurrences, which was used from year 22 to year 25. There is no apparent distinction in the way the two seals were used, except that Seal 30 was not used for the more southerly places. Evidently, because of increased activity, it was found advisable to maintain two scribal offices from year 22 to year 25; the great majority of Seal 3 texts are dated within that period.

We come now to Seal 4, in the Fahliyan area. Here we have a long, winding valley, quite narrow most of the way, but broader in some places. There are nine travel stops at which rations are issued to travelers, and thus it is eight days' journey from the first (Parmadan) to the last (Dasher). We have hundreds of texts which record the issuance of travel rations. But Seal 4 occurs with only one of these.

Seal 4 belongs to an official named Irshena, who, like Karkish and Shuddayauda in the Persepolis area, bears the title "chief of workers." The seal in most cases occurs with texts which record the payment of regular monthly rations for groups of workers, and in nearly all cases Irshena is named as assigning the workers or as setting their rations.

Incidentally we may observe that Seal 4 belonged first to someone else, since it is inscribed with an Elamite personal name and paternity. Perhaps Irshena bought it from a used seal salesman. At any rate it does seem that fancy seals were too precious to go unused, even when inscribed with the wrong name.

Seal 4 is used from year 17 to year 23. Something rather strange is taking place, if we can trust the evidence of the texts: first the jurisdiction withdraws from the western part of Fahliyan and later it extends eastward into the adjacent part of the Kamfiruz area. After year 19 it has no occurrences in the west. In year 22 it begins to appear at two nearby places in Kamfiruz.

Before, during, and after the period that he was associated with Seal 4 in Fahliyan, Irshena was active also, with other seals, in the Persepolis area. We can conclude that the use of Seal 4 did not necessarily imply the presence of Irshena. We can also conclude that Seal 4 defined a jurisdiction much more specifically than did the name Irshena.

Another official, Irtuppiya, was very active in the Fahliyan area. In many Seal 4 texts he serves as a supplier of commodities in eastern Fahliyan, as a subordinate of Irshena. During the same period he appears often, in other roles, with his own seal, in the western part of the area. There he functions most frequently as an agent, that is, a person who receives commodities and passes them on to the ultimate recipients. Usually it is easy to assume that a supplier or an agent was present where a transfer of commodities took place. This is difficult to assume in the case of Irtuppiya. It may be that in the western part of the area the presence of his seal was more important than his personal presence.

Earlier I mentioned a seal usage that I chose to regard as a norm, namely, the case in which the seal of the supplier is impressed on the left edge, the seal of the recipient on the reverse. This usage occurs with greatest regularity with the travel ration texts. Naturally the seal of the supplier recurs often, the seal of the recipient rather rarely. But there are enough recurrences of same recipient with same seal to establish the principle. There is a travel guide whose seal occurs eleven times. Strictly speaking he is not a recipient but an agent for the parties which he guides.

A frequent supplier of flour is Haturdada at the place Kurdushum in western Fahliyan. Haturdada uses four seals. The first occurs in year 21, the second in years 22 and 23. There is then a gap of three years, a period in which travel texts are scarce. The third seal is used in years 27 and 28, the fourth in year 28, overlapping the third seal, a curious fact. The seals actually belong, not to Haturdada, but to the supply office. In a few cases beer is supplied at Kurdushum and another person (Ummanana) is named as supplier, once with the second of the above seals, once with the fourth, though he appears more often with another seal altogether, which he uses in the years 21 to 23.

Generally speaking, the seals of suppliers don't seem to last very long. I suppose they get lost or broken. There are a great many of these seals; they have not been adequately studied, and I am not prepared to offer general conclusions about their use.

In the Kamfiruz area there is one very frequent supplier of travel rations whose tablets never carry a seal impression.<sup>14</sup> Thus we see that there were sigillophobes as well as sigillophiliacs.

The small tablets which record individual payments were sent to Persepolis or nearby. There they had to be sorted according to origin, a process in which the seals would be very helpful. Then they served as basis for the production of accounting texts. These are written on rectangular tablets, sometimes quite large. Normally each one covers all the receipts and disbursements of a given supply officer during a specific period. The seals which are associated with the accounting texts evidently belonged to an accounting office.

Much the most frequent of these seals is Seal 12, with 70 occurrences. It evidently was used at Kamenush, a place not far from Persepolis. Three of the texts name Kamenush in subscripts, one of which says: "Daddama gave us this account in year 21, 3rd month, 10th day."<sup>15</sup> I take it that "us" refers to the accountants, who are not named. Exactly what Daddama did is not clear; perhaps he delivered the small tablets on which the account is based. As it happens, another account text (unpublished) reports that Daddama "gave an account" at Persepolis on the very next day.

The accounts with Seal 12 concern various commodities in many different places, places in each of the three main areas and also places outside of those areas. The most striking fact is the time-lag. The activities reported date from year 13 to year 19. When the accounts themselves are dated, which is rather rarely, the dates range from the second month of year 20 to the third month of year 21.

There are two other subjects I think I should discuss, even though they are confusing.

First, there is a particular kind of text (Category C1)<sup>16</sup> which is sometimes accompanied by as many as four seals (F-2a-c). In these texts commodities are said to be "placed upon" a person, which I interpret as "deposited to his account," though I am not really sure what is going on. In the great majority of cases the commodity is some kind of fruit or else tarmu-grain, perhaps wheat, which in texts of other categories is far less frequent than barley. Places in the three main areas are involved, also places outside those areas. Two places are most frequently mentioned, neither of which is frequent in other texts. One is Baktish, in the southwestern part of the Kamfiruz area, where tarmu-grain is deposited. The other is Nupishtash, where various fruits are deposited. Nupishtash apparently lies in southeastern Fahliyan west of Baktish and perhaps not far from it. The seals involved occur rarely or never with other kinds of texts. When four seals appear on one of these tablets, that should mean that four jurisdictions are involved. But why should four jurisdictions be involved with a deposit of tarmu-grain? In any case, there seems to be no good clue to identify even one of these jurisdictions.

As a final oddity, we have two pairs of identical texts with different seals.<sup>17</sup> If the two parties involved were functioning independently on their own behalf there would be no problem; but then the tablets would

not have wound up in an administrative archive. In both cases a large quantity of tarmu-grain is supplied by a person at the place Zakzaku in western Fahliyan, taken to a nearby place, and received by another person, who uses it to make beer. I should guess that the two persons reported to two different offices, and each had to provide a document authenticated by his own seal. The two copies then went by different routes to the same ultimate destination, namely, the Persepolis fortification archive.

## NOTES

1. For details on the tablets, see Hallock, *Persepolis Fortification Tablets* (OIP 92 [Chicago, 1969]), hereafter cited as PFT. The texts published there are cited as PF 1-2087. It should be noted that these tablets are not the same as those discussed in E. F. Schmidt, *Persepolis 2* (OIP 69 [Chicago, 1957]), nor for the most part are the Fortification archive sealings treated in this paper identical with the sealings treated in that volume. The Treasury archive, of about 750 texts, has been published by George Cameron, *Persepolis Treasury Tablets* (OIP 65 [Chicago, 1948]), hereafter cited as PTT.
2. See PFT, pp. 78ff. My seal numbers are not to be confused with those given by Schmidt in *Persepolis 2*, pp. 4ff. for the Treasury archive.
3. See PF 697f., 705-709, 711-27, 2034.
4. See PF 699-704.
5. See PF 692-95, 2033.
6. PF 691, 729.
7. PF 696, 728.
8. See PF 730-34, 2035.
9. See PF 735-40.
10. See PF 1835-39. The only letter from Irdabama is unpublished.
11. PF 1837.
12. Darius, Behistun inscription, Para. 68, and Naqsh-i-Rustam inscription, c (for Achaemenid royal inscriptions see R. G. Kent, *Old Persian* [American Oriental Society, American Oriental Series Volume 33 (New Haven, 1950)], pp. 116ff.).
13. For Irdumartiya (Old Persian Artavardiya) see Behistun inscription, Paras. 41f. With his seal (Seal 71=Treasury Type 33, Schmidt, *Persepolis 2*, Pl. 10) he is a recipient in PF 689, 690, sender of letters in PF 1830, PF 1831, and PT 1963-20 (see G. Cameron, *JNES* 24 [1965], p. 182). In G. Cameron, PTT, p. 92 the Aramaic legend on his seal is incorrectly read (unless the original is incorrect). For Aspathines see Naqsh-i-Rustam inscription d. With his seal (Treasury Type 14, Schmidt, *Persepolis 2*, Pl. 6) he appears as recipient in two unpublished fortification texts, as sender of letters in PF 1853 and PT 12, 12a, and 14 (PTT, pp. 102ff.).
14. This is Pirratamka at Uzikurrash; see PF 1411-30, 1433-36.
15. From an unpublished text. Cf. PF 1997:24-26.
16. See PFT for the various categories of texts.
17. See PF 40, in which lines 8-11 must be corrected to read as follows: m.Pir-ri-ya/iš-ba du-iš-/da ʾh.KAŠ<sup>1</sup>.lg hu-da-/iš-da, "Pirriyashba received (it). He made beer." The text thus belongs to Category E. The other three texts involved are unpublished.

## Aspects of Sealing and Glyptic in Egypt Before the New Kingdom

by

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Sealing was not characteristic of the Predynastic period in Egypt. The first actual seals to appear belonged to the so-called Jamdat Nasr type of cylinder seal (F-4a-d). These were found in contexts of later Gerzean (Naqada II) date.<sup>1</sup> There is no evidence that they were used as seals.

Sealing first appeared as a widespread practice in the royal cemeteries of Saqqara and Abydos in the First Dynasty (ca. 3100 B.C.) (F-5a-c).<sup>2</sup> A few sealings of this date were found elsewhere, especially at Abu Roach and Helwan.<sup>3</sup>

The types of seals used include cylinders with only royal names and titles,<sup>4</sup> and cylinders, often with the royal name and titles, which had the name of an estate or location.<sup>5</sup> Other cylinders contained the royal titles with what appear to be titles of officials, possibly also the names of these officials.<sup>6</sup> Finally, there was a group of cylinders that had only designs and representations.<sup>7</sup> Many seals of this type had the design elements scattered or alternated over the entire surface of the seal in a manner that reflects the origin of the cylinder seal in the Jamdat Nasr imports of the Predynastic period.<sup>8</sup>

The types of sealings included those for jars, bags, and possibly bound commodities. Jar stoppers included a dome with vertical impressions of the seal that crossed at the center of the top, a flattened dome, and a truncated cone.<sup>9</sup> This last type sometimes bore a seal impression on the outside, but sometimes the impression was covered with a layer of mud which would then be given finger impressions. Small clay stoppers were made for jars imported from Syro-Palestine, and sealed with Egyptian seals.<sup>10</sup> There were bag sealings with the impression of leather and string on the underside and the impressions of cylinder seals on three sides.<sup>11</sup> The occurrence of simple string sealings is uncertain.

Since there are no documents preserved, it is unsure whether documents were sealed at this time.

Perhaps the most important feature of Archaic period sealing (F-6a-b) is its use in connection with government. Sealings are commonly found in the royal cemeteries and dependent burials but are not well attested elsewhere.<sup>12</sup> Although glyptic art appeared in other cemeteries, as I shall discuss below, it apparently did not have a function related to sealing.

Both the uses and types of seals found in the Archaic period continued in the Old Kingdom (2686-2181 B.C.). By the reign of Khufu, a new type of string sealing had come into use. A string was passed around a box in two directions and knotted at the top. The knot was covered by a dome-shaped lump of mud which had a cylinder seal rolled over it. This type of sealing was found in the tomb of Hetepheres (F-6c-d).<sup>13</sup>

Major groups of sealings of this period were found in the cemetery of Giza<sup>14</sup> and at Buhen in Nubia.<sup>15</sup> The essentially royal and governmental function of sealing appears to have continued. Private use of seals was rare or non-existent.<sup>16</sup> Since many of the sealings were associated with private tombs or at least non-royal tombs, we may conclude that there were often deliveries of goods from royal storehouses to private burials (*hetep di nesu*).<sup>17</sup> This was true of an Early Bronze III amphora of Levantine origin sealed with the name of Pepi II and found in the tomb of Impi.<sup>18</sup>

Sealing undoubtedly continued in the First Intermediate period and Eleventh Dynasty (2181-1991 B.C.), though we have no well-defined and dated groups of seals from this period. However, models of jars from the model chambers of Nebhepetre' Mentuhotep and his retainer Meketre' have flattened mud stoppers that were probably sealed.<sup>19</sup> It would appear that ownership of the jar or commodities it contained was not indicated by the seal on it at this time. Jars had the names of the owners (or contents) painted in labels on the side.<sup>20</sup> This was a practice that had begun in the Archaic period on stone vessels and which would continue into the New Kingdom when it became quite elaborate.<sup>21</sup>

By the Eleventh Dynasty, there was a new type of seal and a new use for sealing. This may be demonstrated by the sealed string for a letter of Hekanakht (G-1c). There was no name on the impression, only the hieroglyph for seal, *htm*, and some spiral design.<sup>22</sup> The type of seal used for this impression, a stamp with an oval stamping surface, was shown by the great silver scarab of Wah, the estate manager of Meketre'. The name of the owner was on the back of this object and the face contained only designs with the "nefer" signs (G-1a-b).<sup>23</sup>

This new style of seal became widespread at this time, apparently replacing the use of cylinder seals. A group of seals from Abu Ghalib (F-7), near Eshmunein, is instructive. These came mostly from large complexes of the late Eleventh and Twelfth Dynasties, with perhaps a few later examples.<sup>24</sup> With one exception, none of the seals had names or titles of any kind. This one sealing contained the name of Sneferu, probably part of an estate or place name.<sup>25</sup> All of the sealings had designs, or, more rarely, representational motifs. There is no clear evidence for the use of these sealings, but the fine clay may indicate that they were used at least partly for sealing documents in the manner of the Hekanakht letter.<sup>26</sup>

There were a number of scarabs, scaraboids, and cylinders found with these sealings. There was no sign that the cylinders had been used as seals.<sup>27</sup>

In the late Twelfth and Thirteenth Dynasties, the scarabs and scaraboids were used for sealings on both commodities and documents. In addition to these seal types, there were larger official seals of offices, departments, and even fortresses which were generally on the base of figurines of animals or statuettes.<sup>28</sup>

The major groups of sealings from this period came from the town at Illahun (Kahun) and from the fortresses in Nubia. These sealings included examples with the names and titles of individuals as well as the stamps of officials, offices, and the forts. In addition, sealings with only designs continued and new designs, such as representations, occurred.<sup>29</sup>

The groups of sealings from the forts and Illahun were large and not very well dated within the general period of the late Twelfth and Thirteenth Dynasties. A small group of sealings from a dummy mastaba in the so-called cenotaph of Senwosret III at Abydos (F-8) may be of some assistance in sorting out the types chronologically. This group contained only seals with linear (i.e., spiral) designs and names and titles. One of these was of a vizier Iymeru of the Thirteenth Dynasty.<sup>30</sup> The group contained none of the seals or scarabs with concentric circles so popular later.<sup>31</sup> There were also no royal scarabs found in the group. This last fact brings us to a problem with the groups from the town at Illahun and the fortresses in Nubia. There was evidence, especially at Illahun, of scarabs with royal names of the Twelfth Dynasty being used as seals. The burial at Dahshur of King Aibre' Hor of the Thirteenth Dynasty

contained a box that was sealed with such a scarab which had the name of Amenemhat III of the Twelfth Dynasty.<sup>32</sup> At Buhen in Nubia, Tomb K 8 contained the body of a person that had a scarab mounted in a ring with the name of Amenemhat III among the finger bones and a plaque with the name of Neferhotep I of the Thirteenth Dynasty on the shoulder.<sup>33</sup> These clear examples of reuse of scarabs with royal names forms an interesting comparison with the royal cylinders known from the Middle Kingdom.

Many cylinders have the names of kings of the Twelfth Dynasty, but there is no evidence that they were ever used as cylinder seals. One cylinder from Riqqa had the names of Senwosret I, Senwosret III, and Amenemhat III; the first of these kings was certainly dead at the time the cylinder was made.<sup>34</sup> One cylinder from Abydos had the same three names on it; it was made with seven lobes, which would have made its use as a seal all but impossible.<sup>35</sup> In addition, there were small glazed cylinders with the names of Senwosret III and Amenemhat III which were too small to be used as seals; further, the glaze had filled up the depressions made for the names.<sup>36</sup>

There are similar difficulties in interpreting as seals many scarabs, scaraboids, plaques, etc., with private names. Many of these scarabs had funerary formulas that indicated that the person was deceased.<sup>37</sup> There were also many persons whose names and titles appeared on more than one scarab. In some cases large numbers of scarabs have the names and titles of one person, sometimes as many as fifty or more.<sup>38</sup> It is therefore clear that many scarabs and all cylinders of Middle Kingdom date in Egypt had functions not originally connected with sealing. Though the royal scarabs and cylinders remain unexplained, many scarabs with private names and titles certainly had a funerary function.

There may be some precedent for this funerary function. A number of Archaic period cylinders from Naga ed-Der contain the names and titles of private persons. In addition, these have representations of the standard funerary meal (F-9a-c)<sup>39</sup> as generally shown on false doors and slab stelae of the Archaic and Old Kingdom periods.<sup>40</sup>

There is no clear example of cylinders of this type from the Old Kingdom proper. By the end of that period, however, a number of buttons and animal amulets appeared, some with representational designs (F-10).<sup>41</sup> Many of the amulets show single striding figures or figures seated on a chair.<sup>42</sup> By far the most common representation of a person seated on a chair in ancient Egypt was in the funerary meal scene on the slab stele or false door. By the Old Kingdom, single striding figures also had that funerary function.<sup>43</sup>

There are only a few representational seals from the group of Abu Ghalib in the early Middle Kingdom. Only one of these is a striding man; there are none with a person seated on a chair. It may be that a distinction was still made between the seal and the funerary amulet of similar shape.<sup>44</sup>

It is thus possible to discern precedents in Egypt for the use of seal-like objects as funerary amulets of some sort. This becomes the best explanation for the scarabs with names, titles, and funerary formulas. The existence of many scarabs with the same names and titles may be explained either by their use as funerary amulets or by the invocation of their names later.

This invocation is especially clear in the case of royal scarabs. The cylinders on which one or more names were invoked have already been discussed. It became common practice in the Middle Kingdom to use the names of deceased kings on stelae and other objects in the "hetep di nesu" formula as part of the list of gods.<sup>45</sup>

It should be clear that the scarabs with the names of Middle Kingdom rulers are only *termini post quem* for the contexts in which they occur. Their use as seals is secondary and unrelated to the royal name on the sealing surface, as was shown above by the occurrence of Amenemhat III on the box of Aibre' Hor and in tomb K 8 at Buhen.



Unrelated re-use should be sought as an explanation for impression of multiple scarabs with the same names and titles, and for the use of funerary scarabs as seals. After the robbery of the owners' tombs, the scarabs were scattered about, often used as seals by others. The inscription on the scarab was unimportant as was shown by the use of seals without inscriptions by Hekanakht, at Abu Ghalib, at Illahun, and in Nubia. It was only important that there be an impression to certify that the jar, box, bound commodity, or document was intact. This re-use was common in the mixed contexts at Illahun, the forts at Nubia, and later, at Kerma.<sup>46</sup> Whatever the original intended use of the scarab, it was likely to be re-used as a seal or even as a funerary amulet by someone else later.<sup>47</sup>

By the end of the Thirteenth Dynasty, at least three uses for seal-like objects can be distinguished. Some objects were clearly seals. These included the seals of departments and forts. They are generally easily identified by their large size and their shield shape. In addition, unique seals or sealings of officials with sealing functions may belong to this class.

Many scarabs, scaraboids, and other seal-like objects were clearly funerary amulets. Multiple scarabs of one person, some royal scarabs (the foundation deposits of Hatshepsut), scarabs with funerary formulas, and scarabs with the representations of single persons probably belong to this class.

Other seal-shaped objects were clearly intended to invoke the names written on them, again as amulets. These may not have been funerary. Royal cylinders, many royal scarabs, and the Middle Kingdom objects with names of kings from the Old Kingdom belong to this class.

Scarabs with designs may have been intended for either funerary or sealing function; there is no way to be certain of their intended use. This is also true of scarabs with representations. Nevertheless, all of the scarabs, whether originally intended for use as seals, funerary amulets, or other amulets, were likely to be reused at a later date for a function not originally intended. They became interchangeable.

The practice of sealing began in the First Dynasty, with cylinders sometimes naming the king, often the place of origin, probably the office, and possibly even the individual responsible for either the goods or the sealing (F-11).

In the Old Kingdom, this tradition continued in the sealings of Khufu's time and later. There was even a certain continuity in the stamp seals of departments and forts of the Middle Kingdom. However, some time after the end of the Old Kingdom and before the Twelfth Dynasty, the use of the cylinder seal was discontinued. It was replaced by the stamp seal. In addition, sealing came to be practiced by a wide variety of persons some of whom had no governmental function. Most of the stamp sealings from the early Middle Kingdom had no identification of the owner or of any office, only a design. Though a great many private name scarabs appeared in the late Middle Kingdom, the use of design scarabs continued throughout the Middle Kingdom, into the Second Intermediate period, and even into the New Kingdom. The willingness to use seals without identification led to the indiscriminate use of funerary amulets as seals and the re-use of private name seals of earlier times throughout the Second Intermediate period.

One theme is constant from the Archaic period to the New Kingdom. Sealing was used in Egypt to certify that containers, bound commodities, or documents were intact. A seal was not used to authenticate a document nor as a signature.

## NOTES

Unless fully noted, citations follow the form of Helck and Otto, *Lexikon der Ägyptologie*.

1. H. J. Kantor, "Egypt and Its Foreign Correlations Before the Late Bronze Age," in *Chronologies in Old World Archaeology*, ed. Robert W. Ehrich (Chicago, 1965), fig. 8, pp. 10-11.
2. Emery, *Hemaka*, pp. 62-63; Emery, *Ḥor-Aḥa*, pp. 62-63; Emery, *Tombs of the First Dynasty 1*, p. 75, fig. 37 and pp. 82, 109, 123; Emery, *Tombs of the First Dynasty 2*, pp. 114-27; Emery, *Tombs of the First Dynasty 3*, pl. 106; Petrie, *RT 1*, pl. 12; *RT 2*, pls. 5, 13-24.
3. Zaki Saad, *The Excavations at Helwan: Art and Civilization in the First and Second Dynasties* (Norman, 1969), pl. 94 and p. 67.
4. Emery, *Tombs of the First Dynasty 2*, p. 115, figs. 143-46.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 119, fig. 163; p. 120, fig. 165.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 123, fig. 179; p. 126, fig. 194.
7. Petrie, *RT 2*, pl. 14, 101-04.
8. Emery, *Ḥor-Aḥa*, p. 29, fig. 27; p. 32, figs. 34 and 35.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 19, fig. 10.
10. Emery, *Tombs of the First Dynasty 2*, p. 126, fig. 52.
11. Emery, *Ḥor-Aḥa*, p. 20, fig. 11.
12. Saad, *The Excavations at Helwan*, p. 67. Saad described the use of seals and remarked on the consistent occurrence of sealing. He did not detail the occurrences in either publication of Helwan.
13. Reisner, *Giza 2*, p. 22.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 48-59.
15. Walter B. Emery, "Preliminary Report of the Excavations at Buhen," *Kush* 11 (1963), pp. 116-20, fig. 2.
16. Reisner, *Giza 2*, fig. 54, no. 27-3-500 may be the sealing of a princess rather than that of an office or official.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 48-59.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 54, fig. 54; Tomb 6238 A, fig. 98.
19. Dieter Arnold, "Bericht über die vom Deutschen Archäologischen Institut Kairo im Mntw-ḥtp Tempel und in El-Tarif unternommen Arbeiten," *MDAIK* 28 (1972), pp. 13-32, pl. 9.
20. Unpublished labels from pottery in the Cairo Museum, including Beb from Dendera.
21. W. C. Hayes, "Inscriptions from the Palace of Amenhotep III," *JNES* 10 (1951), pp. 35-40, figs. 12-16.
22. *Ḥeḳanakhte Papers*, p. 45, pl. 9.
23. H. E. Winlock, *Excavations at Deir el Bahri 1911-1931* (New York, 1942), pl. 30.
24. H. Larsen, "Vorbericht über die schwedischen Grabungen in Abu Ghalib 1932/34," *MDAIK* 6 (1936), pp. 61-66, 83-87 (discussing the Snefru seal); *idem*, "Vorbericht über die schwedischen Grabungen in Abu Ghalib 1936/37," *MDAIK* 10 (1941), pp. 1-59, esp. pp. 14-25.
25. Larsen, *MDAIK* 6 (1936), pp. 83-87.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
27. It is not known whether the Snefru sealing was made by a cylinder or a stamp.
28. See J. Johnson in this volume for further discussion.
29. *Illahun, Kahun and Gurob*, pl. 9, nos. 37 and 39.

30. Abydos 3, pl. 39, nos. 1-15.
31. J. Vercoutter, *Mirgissa 1*, pl. 26, 3 (of Nubkheperre Intef, Dyn. XVII-1); Martin, *Seals*, pl. 17 contains seals with rope borders (type 4); pls. 40-41 contain scarabs with segmented fields and representations.
32. Dahchour, p. 105, fig. 246 and pl. 37.
33. D. Randall-MacIver and C. Leonard Woolley, *Buhen* (The Eckley B. Coxe, Jr., Expedition to Nubia, Vol. 7) (Philadelphia, 1911), pp. 200-201 (chamber F) Scarab 10758 was inscribed with the name Nemaatre' (Amenemhat III) of Dynasty XII. The glazed plaque 10755 was inscribed Men-merut, one or the names of Neferhotep I of the Thirteenth Dynasty (XIII-22).
34. Riqqa and Memphis 6, pl. 17, 1. The only example of the use of these cylinders as seals known to me is a group of eight sealings found in a later Middle Kingdom deposit by Emery at Kubban, in which instance a cylinder with the Horus name of Senwosret II was used as a stamp seal. See W. B. Emery and L. P. Kirwan, *The Excavations and Survey between Wadi es-Sebua and Adindan 1929-1931* (Cairo, 1935), p. 55.
35. El Arábah, pls. 4, 11 from tomb E 282.
36. Garstang, "Note on a Vase of Minoan Fabric from Abydos (Egypt)," *AAA* 5 (1913), pp. 107-11, pls. 13-14.
37. See J. Johnson, this volume, and Martin, *Seals*, p. 15, no. 112, and p. 21, no. 206, for example.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 16-18. *Ip*k, s3 nsw had two examples and *ip*k, s3 nsw šmsw, forty-one examples; *h3*-*nh*.f, *it ntr* (Khaneferre' Sebekhotep, XIII-24), pp. 74-78, nos. 919-78, fifty-nine examples; *h3r*, *sd3wty bity*, *imy-r sd3wtj*, pp. 78-85, nos. 984-1088a, 105 examples.
39. Petrie, *Scarabs*, pls. 1-2. The funerary meal scene is clear in no. 20, from Naga ed-Deir as well as many seals from the collections. Smith, *Art and Architecture*, pls. 13-14.
40. Frankfort, *The Birth of Civilization in the Near East*, p. 123, figs. 37-39. The use of these cylinders as funerary amulets has long been recognized.
41. G. A. Reisner, *A Provincial Cemetery of the Pyramid Age, Naga ed-Deir 3* (University of California Publications, *Egyptian Archaeology*, vol. 6) (Oxford, 1932), pp. 112-15, figs. 47-50; Qau and Badari 1, pls. 32-34.
42. Qau and Badari 1, pl. 32, 55, 57, 48, 49 for seated figures, 50, 51 for standing figures.
43. Smith, *Art and Architecture*, pl. 28 A.
44. Larsen, *MDAIK* 10, p. 17, fig. 11, nos. 495, 830, and 479.
45. Barta, *Opferformel*, pp. 56-57. Note also that private persons were invoked as well, often with the formula *m3*'-*hrw*, "deceased."
46. Reisner, *Excavations at Kerma, Parts 4-5* (HAS 6) (Cambridge, Mass., Peabody Museum of Harvard University, 1923), p. 76.
47. Mariette, *Mon. Div.*, pp. 16-17, pl. 51. There were six objects with names from this group of "Ak-Hor," no two names the same.

## Private Name Seals of the Middle Kingdom

by

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Cylinder seals bearing the names of individuals have been found in Egypt in lower-class Archaic period (c. 3100-2600 B.C.) tombs, where they probably served as the poor man's funerary stela (F-9a-c). No examples are known where such seals were used to seal anything. The sealings found by Emery at Saqqara may contain names and titles, possibly even the title "sealbearer."<sup>1</sup> But, Egyptian of the Archaic period is so uncertain that one cannot even be positive that any names are actually included. Neither seals nor sealings with non-royal personal names are attested from the Old Kingdom (c. 2600-2180 B.C.). For the early Middle Kingdom (Dynasty XI and the first half of Dynasty XII (c. 2133-1878 B.C.)) there is evidence of private individuals sealing their property—the seal on the Hekanakht letter (G-1c), for example, and the sealings from Abu Ghalib (F-7). But these, like the design scarabs found in First Intermediate period cemeteries, do not name the owner of the seal.<sup>2</sup> However, in the late Middle Kingdom (second half of Dynasty XII and Dynasty XIII (c. 1878-1674 B.C.)) there are a large number of seals and sealings which give the name and/or titles, usually both, of the owner.<sup>3</sup> Most of the private name seals are scarab stamp seals; many were made of steatite, although other stones were also used, especially jasper, obsidian, amethyst, and felspar. Several were made of what has been called "hard paste," one of pottery. These seals inscribed with private names exist alongside a much larger number with purely decorative designs. The provenience of most private name seals is unknown. A few were found in scattered excavations at Abydos, Coptos, Qaw el-Kebir, Tell el-Yehudiyeh, Thebes, Ṭukh, etc. Most of the excavated seals and sealings come from the excavations of the town of Kahun and the pyramid area at Lisht, both in the area of the Residence of the king and the seat of the central government,<sup>4</sup> or from the excavations of the Nubian forts, which were built during the XIIth Dynasty to control the native population of Nubia, protect the southern frontier, and serve as trading posts.

Some of these private name seals could be a reversion to the Archaic period practice of indicating the owner's name on amuletic seals intended for funerary purposes. Some were found in tombs (e.g., 136, 1063, and 1314 from Qaw el-Kebir, 299a, 872c, 1065a, and 1576a from Debeira East: numbers here and following are those assigned to the seals in Martin). That others were indeed intended as funerary pieces is shown by the inclusion of such epithets as "justified of voice,"<sup>5</sup> a phrase indicating that the named individual is dead. It was applied first to Osiris; from the early Middle Kingdom on, with the rise in popularity of the Osirid religion and the identification of non-royal dead with Osiris, the epithet was applied to private individuals also. A few seals even contain the formula which is usually translated "a boon which the king gives . . ."<sup>6</sup> and was the traditional offering formula for the dead person. A funerary amuletic function is also most likely in those cases in which one individual had several seals, all bearing the same title or titles and often including epithets such as "justified of voice." For instance, 28 seals have been found naming the Sealbearer of the King of Lower Egypt, Sole Companion, and Overseer of Treasures Senebsuma and two more without the middle title (1513-1541a); there are 19 seals of the God's Father Ha'ankhef<sup>7</sup> associated with Khasekhemra (Neferhotep) (919-937), 38 with Khanefer (Sobekhotep IV) (938-975), and one with Menwadja (976); and there are 100 seals of the Sealbearer of the King of Lower Egypt and Overseer of Treasures Har (987-1077a)

and 12 more with the additional title Sole Companion (1078-1088a). This return to the practice of putting the name on the glyptic amulet to be included in the tomb, especially in association with epithets such as "justified of voice," might reflect the so-called "democratization of the afterlife," which began during the First Intermediate period and spread down through the ranks during the Middle Kingdom, with dead individuals appropriating previously royal titles, prerogatives, and magic, such as the Coffin Texts. The growing preference for scaraboid seals may be related to the identification of the scarab with the god Khepri and the inclusion of a heart scarab on mummies, as, for example, the scarab (390) of Wah, the Overseer of the Storehouse<sup>8</sup> (G-1a-b). The heart scarab was intended to prevent the heart from betraying the dead man.<sup>9</sup>

However, not all the Middle Kingdom seals with personal names and titles were intended as funerary objects. Some were mounted, usually in precious metal, so that the owner might wear them; for instance, 1668 is in a bronze ring, 804 in a silver ring, 47, 195, 551a, and 1216 in gold rings, and 262 in a gold swivel pin. In addition, many sealings have been found bearing the imprints of such private name seals. Among these is a group of sealings found at Abydos which, by the string impressions in the lumps of mud and the fragments of papyrus adhering to them, were probably around papyri. These sealings include the stamps of three seals with private names and titles—the Doorkeeper Seneb (1486), the Overseer of the Royal Harem Iy (8), and the Overseer of the City, Vizier, and Overseer of the 6 Great Courts (Chief Justice) Iymeru (49).<sup>10</sup> The last was a member of the famous family of viziers who held power during the XIIIth Dynasty.<sup>11</sup> None of the sealings included in this group contained any of the epithets which would indicate that the seals were ultimately intended as funerary objects. The findspot of the sealings, dummy mastaba S8, tends to indicate they were contemporary with the named individuals, not secondary reuse of seals stolen from tombs. Thus, they probably represent government officials working in their official capacity. Examples of private name seal impressions have also been found in situ on pottery and on boxes and chests.<sup>12</sup> There are also numerous examples of impressions, often several impressions from the same seal, from the town site of Kahun and from the Nubian forts. Since in many cases the inscriptions do not include any funerary epithets, the seals from which they were made had no original funerary intent (e.g., those of Iyib, who was the Scribe of the Overseer of the Seal of Hetep-senwosret and Ankh-senwosret, the pyramid towns of Sesostris III and II, respectively [42-43 and 44(?)]; of the Lady of the House It [287-88]; of the Citizen Sobekrausermontu [1414-15]; of the Controller of a Phyle and Son of a Mayor Senebtyfy [1599-1600]; of the Doorkeeper Hwyt [1094]; and of the Retainers Iry [266], Ankhu [348], Khentykhet [1225], and Gebu [1714]).<sup>13</sup>

Thus, some private name seals were being used like the Middle Kingdom design scarabs to safeguard items. Why were the name and title(s) of the owner added to such seals? A majority of the titles which appear on the seals reflect positions of authority or accountability within the governmental bureaucracy. Such positions of authority include high officials within the civil bureaucracy, from the vizier down through the heads of the administrative departments into which Egypt was divided in the late Middle Kingdom, including the equivalents of modern cabinet officials or ministers, e.g., the Chief Treasurer or the Minister of Agriculture; the Mayors of the pyramid towns of Sesostris II and III; and various Reporters, who were the chief local representatives of the central government; plus assorted Chamberlains, Chief Stewards, Controllers or Overseers, Administrators, and Deputies.<sup>14</sup> There are also a few seals and sealings belonging to people high in the military and religious hierarchies, e.g., Generals and Chief Priests.<sup>15</sup> Many of the seals and sealings are, however, of lesser functionaries, especially people in charge of storehouses, treasuries, and various assembly rooms,<sup>16</sup> who were presumably responsible for the goods coming into and going out of their domains. Such responsibility is known already in the Old Kingdom from the Abu Sir papyri and is well attested for the Middle Kingdom (e.g., P. Berlin 10003A, from the reign of Sesostris III). Scribes of various officials or departments also had seals,<sup>17</sup> as did the Overseer of Sale Documents.<sup>18</sup>

Many of the officials with seals had titles including the word "seal" or "sealbearer."<sup>19</sup> Many of these were traditional titles (e.g., Sealbearer of the King of Lower Egypt or Overseer of the Sealbearers [Chief

Treasurer]). But in other cases the title presumably reflected an actual dealing with seals (e.g., the Controller of the Seal of the House of Amun<sup>20</sup>). Note also that the Middle Egyptian word for contract was *ḥtmt* “sealed thing.”

In addition to the private name seals from this period, there are some seals and numerous sealings of government offices. Most of these are shield-shaped stamp seals (G-2). One preserved seal is in the form of a miniature block statuette (1842). There are preserved sealings of, e.g., the Treasury (1841), the impressions from which were found on a box containing a wig, the Seal of the Treasury of the Army (1843), the Treasury of Iqen (the fort at Mirgissa) (1851), the Seal of the Storehouse of Waf-Khasut (the fort at Shalfak) (1862), the Seal of the Granary of Buhen (1869), the Office of the Senior Administrator of the Southern City (Thebes) (1845), the [Off]ice of the Vizier of the Southern City (1848), the Office of the Vizier of the Head of the South (the southernmost geographical administrative department) (1849), the Administrator of the Fayum (?) of the Office of the Vizier (1846), the Administrator of Hetep-senwosret . . . and (?) the Fa[yum] (?) of the Office of the Vizier (1847), and the Seal of the Mayor of Iq[en] (1856).<sup>21</sup> Also extant are sealings of seals of places, especially the Nubian forts (e.g., 1865, 1867, 1874, and 1875).

Martin suggests that, since even during this period when private name seals are attested, the ratio of seals with names to those without is small, “the inference is that the right to use a title and name on a seal was confined to a privileged few by virtue of their office. The humbler individual, when he had occasion to seal a document, did so with a seal bearing a personal mark or decorative design.”<sup>22</sup> The use of seals by departments combined with the above observation of the types of titles so common on private name seals leads to the tentative hypothesis that names were added to seals not simply as a mark of privilege but so that the government office or specific officeholder responsible for the sealing of specific objects could be easily identified. This suggestion fits with the extensive bureaucratic reorganization undertaken in the second half of the XIIth Dynasty.<sup>23</sup> Sesostri III deposed the old provincial ruling families; Egypt was divided into three geographical administrative departments; and new bureaucrats, trained by and responsible to the central government, were put in charge of these geographical districts and of all departments of the civil government. This strong central administration was maintained through the XIIIth Dynasty.<sup>24</sup>

In connection with this, it is interesting to note the similarities and differences between the titles which occur in the two major groups of excavated seals and sealings—those from the area around the Residence and those from Nubia. From the Residence area come numerous examples of seals and sealings of the Vizier, Stewards, Overseers, Mayors of the Pyramid towns, specific palace titles, and assorted scribes. Also relatively numerous from the north are religious titles, either in combination with civil titles, e.g., Mayor of one of the pyramid towns and Overseer of a temple, or alone, e.g., wab-priest or lector-priest.<sup>25</sup> There are relatively few military titles attested in the north. In Nubia there are administrative titles, including some sealings with titles of officials outside of Nubia, presumably brought in from outside on a commodity or dispatch such as the Semna dispatches but going south rather than north (e.g., Overseer of the Counting House of Northern Grain; the Offices of the Viziers of the Southern City and of the Head of the South<sup>26</sup>). There is also evidence of extensive movement of sealed goods between the various Nubian forts. Thus, the sealings found at Uronarti include impressions of seals naming the forts at Mirgissa (1851), Shalfak (1861), Buhen (1865), Biga Island (1874), and Semna West (1876). There are very few religious titles attested in Nubia, but many more military titles than in the north, including some which are known only on seals from Nubia, e.g., Bowman, Retainer of the First Side (?), and Leader of the Retainers of the First Side (?).<sup>27</sup>

If the hypothesis stated above is correct, and names and titles were first added to seals to identify the owner of the seal, and thus the person responsible for a given sealing, then it is possible that the addition of names and titles to obviously funerary seals may have come by analogy from the non-funerary seals. Analogy with such non-funerary seals was also probably responsible for the tendency to add names and titles even when the titles are such that they indicate no government job. Such examples include people given only purely

traditional titles (e.g., Hereditary Prince and Count, and King's Acquaintance,<sup>28</sup> or the feminine equivalents thereof) or where the titles reflect a status rather than a job (e.g., Lady of the House, or Citizen/Citizens). This is presumably true whether these seals of non-functionaries were intended for use during the lifetime of the individual named or were of funerary intent.

Thus the introduction of name and title(s) of private individuals on late Middle Kingdom seals probably reflects two historical changes, the rise of the individual's expectations in the afterlife and the conscious development of a highly organized, hierarchical central government bureaucracy.

#### NOTES

1. See the discussion of the group read *sḏ* in Walter B. Emery, *Tombs of the First Dynasty*, 2, p. 108.
2. For details, see B. Williams, this volume.
3. A catalogue of these private name seals has been published by G. Martin, *Egyptian Administrative and Private-Name Seals, Principally of the Middle Kingdom and Second Intermediate Period* (Oxford: Griffith Institute, Ashmolean Museum, 1971) [cited hereafter as Martin].
4. For the evidence that the royal Residence and central administration remained in the north throughout this period, see W. C. Hayes, "Notes on the Government of Egypt in the Late Middle Kingdom," *JNES* 12 (1953), pp. 31-39, and *idem*, *A Papyrus of the Late Middle Kingdom in the Brooklyn Museum* (Papyrus Brooklyn 35.1446), *Wilbour Monographs*, Vol. 5 (Brooklyn: The Brooklyn Museum, 1955), pp. 134-49. His Index (b), *Titles and Occupations*, is very useful in studying the titles occurring on the seals and sealings.
5. *Mꜣꜥ ḥrw*. See Martin's Index of Epithets and Other Egyptian Words, pp. 187-88, for the catalogue numbers of examples.
6. *Htp-dī-nswt*. References as in note 5.
7. *Sḏꜣwty-bīty*, *smr wꜣty*, *imy-r sḏꜣwt* (Senebsuma); *it ntr* (Ha'ankhef).
8. *'Imy-r st*.
9. As shown by Book of the Dead Spell 30b, the spell inscribed on the heart scarab. See Tb, Allen, p. 115.
10. *'Iry-ꜣt* (Seneb); *imy-r ipt nswt (Iy)*; *imy-r niwt, tꜣty*, *imy-r ḥwt wrt 6 (Iymeru)*.
11. See Hayes, *Papyrus Brooklyn*, pp. 73-74, and Beckerath, 2. *Zwischenzeit*, pp. 98-100.
12. E.g., the Steward (*imy-r pr*) Amenemhat (177) (*jar*); the true (?) King's Acquaintance (*rḥ nswt mꜣꜥ (?)*) Senebtyfy (1601) (*box*).
13. *Sꜣ ḥry ḥtm n Htp-s-n-wsrt ꜣnh-s-n-wsrt (Iyib)*; *nbt pr (It)*; *ꜣnh (n) niwt (Sobekrausermontu)*; *mty n sꜣ, sꜣ ḥꜣty-ꜣ (Senebtyfy)*; *iry-ꜣt (Hwy)*; *šmsw (Iry et al.)*.
14. *'Imy-r niwt, tꜣty (vizier)*; *wꜣrwt (departments)*; *imy-r sḏꜣwtyw (chief treasurer)*; *imy-r ꜣḥwt/ḥbsw (minister of agriculture)*; *ḥꜣty-ꜣ n ḥꜣ-s-n-wsrt-mꜣꜥ-ḥrw* and *ḥꜣty-ꜣ n ḥtp-s-n-wsrt-mꜣꜥ-ḥrw (mayors)*; *wḥmw (reporters)*; *imy-r ꜣḥnwt (chamberlain)*; *imy-r pr (chief steward)*; *ḥry, ḥrp, imy-r, etc. (controllers or overseers)*; *ꜣtw (administrator)*—on this reading, rather than Martin's *wꜣrtw*, see G. Posener, "Sur la valeur phonétique ꜣt > ꜣt du signe J," *RdE* 15 [1963] 127-28); *idnw (deputies)*. See Martin's index of *Titles and Administrative Departments*, pp. 175-87, for the catalogue numbers of these and succeeding titles.
15. *'Imy-r mꜣꜥ (general)*; *imy-r ḥwt-ntr (chief priest)*.
16. E.g., *imy-r st, iry-ꜣt, ḥms, wbꜣw (wdpw)*, and titles involving *šnwty, pr-ḥd, šnꜣ*, and so on.

17. E.g., Royal Document Scribes (sš ˁ n nswt) and the Scribe of the Overseer of the Seal of Hetep-senwosret, mentioned above.
18. 'Imy-r ʾmwt prw.
19. Sdʒw/ḥtmw; sdʒwty.
20. Hrp ḥtm pr ʾmn.
21. Pr-ḥd (1841); ḥtm [n] pr-ḥd mšˁ (1843); ḥtm [n] wdʒ [n] wˁf-ḥʒswt (1862); ḥtm [n] šnwt bwḥn (1869); ḥʒ n sʒb, tʒyty nʾwt rsyt (1845); [ḥ]ʒ n tʒty n nʾwt rsyt (1848); ḥʒ n tʒty n tp-rsy (1849); ḥrpt nt š-sbk n ḥʒ [n] tʒty (1846); ḥrpt nt Htp-s-n-wsrt . . . š-[sbk] n ḥʒ n tʒty (1847); ḥtm [n] ḥʒty-ˁ [n] 'lq[n] (1856).
22. Martin, p. xii.
23. Ibid.
24. See the Hayes references in note 4.
25. Wˁb; ḥry-ḥb.
26. 'Imy-r pr ḥsb ʾt mḥty; ḥʒ n tʒty n nʾwt rsyt, ḥʒ n tʒty n tp-rsy.
27. 'Iry-pd̄t (bowman); šmsw n rmn tp (retainer); sh̄d (leader).
28. R-pˁt ḥʒty-ˁ; rḥ nswt.



## Summation

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From the time when Near Eastern antiquities began to find their way into European private collections, museums and publications, seals have been the object of admiration and study. Cylinder seals, exquisitely carved and individualized, or mass-produced and repetitious, or crudely cut and idiosyncratic, have been the focus of most of the work. These seals, particularly characteristic of Mesopotamia, have been found in great quantity and major catalogues have been, and continue to be, produced for collections in many countries. The papers in this volume deal mainly with cylinder seals, since most are based on Mesopotamian material. In other geographical areas, stamp seals, including Egyptian scarabs, were overwhelmingly preferred and were often as well cut as cylinder seals. Even in Mesopotamia, stamp seals were made and used earlier than cylinders and continued after cylinders were abandoned.

H. Nissen, in his contribution, takes up the question of the replacement of the stamp seal by the cylinder in early Mesopotamia. He accounts for the change by tying it to the seal's function as a safeguard of goods; a rolled cylinder could more adequately cover the surface of a lump of mud applied to the mouth of a jar, or inserted into the mouth as a stopper, or affixed around cords that tied a bundle. An impression of a cylinder seal would also completely cover the surface of a mud ball enclosing a group of objects used for accounting.<sup>1</sup> In his explanation, Nissen expands upon a notion of Henri Frankfort,<sup>2</sup> the scholar who for the first time brought real order into the study of seals by arranging them chronologically on the basis of excavated examples.<sup>3</sup> By placing seals firmly in time, Frankfort was able to show that statements such as ". . . the main use of the seal was to authenticate written documents, letters, and bills of sale, or receipts for goods or money"<sup>4</sup> were misleading or oversimplified. He was able to point to a development of seals and sealing from an early use as a safeguard of commodities to a later use on tablets. I would like to stress, however, that even when seals were used extensively on tablets, they were utilized on only certain kinds of tablets. Also, seals were still being used as often or more often on jars, tied bundles, and the like. We have the idea that seals were used predominantly on tablets because our museums have more sealed tablets than clay sealings, cord-marked tags, and labels.<sup>5</sup> However, in excavations, one often finds such objects, usually in small fragments. Given the kind of excavation techniques that are used in the Near East, it is far more likely that a sealed tablet will be found and registered than a small, broken sealing.

E. Porada, in her contribution, suggests that cylinders were first developed as a by-product of stone bowl manufacture. This may well be the case, but it does not explain why it is only in the Uruk period (ca. 3500 B.C.) that seals were made from bowl cores, and not in an earlier period such as the Late Hassuna (ca. 5000 B.C.) when stone bowls were quite common. It may be that there is something in the Mesopotamian Geist that cries out for a cylindrically-shaped mark of identification, as W. W. Hallo seems to imply in his paper on the anxieties of losing one's seal. But such an "explanation" does not, in fact, explain why cylinders appeared and replaced stamps in Mesopotamia just when civilization was first crystallizing and the area was undergoing enormous economic and social change, nor does it explain why cylinders were replaced by stamp seals in the first millennium B.C. Function of the seal must

be seen as the focus for understanding seal shape, and Frankfort and Nissen are surely on the right track. However, there are more aspects to this form-function equation than its origin and demise.

As can be seen in the various papers, there are continuities, or at least similarities, in the way seals are used through hundreds of years under various dynasties. Likewise, there are breaks, abandonments of various uses, and adoptions of new ones. For instance, in the Uruk period sealed clay balls were replaced by sealed tablets, on which numbers were marked with a stylus. The impressing of seals on these numbered tablets ceased when writing was substituted. From the late Uruk period until Ur III (ca. 2200 B.C.), sealing on written tablets was rare (see P. Steinkeller, this volume), although seals were still employed on bullae, jar stoppers and so on. During the Ur III period, thousands of documents were sealed, but many of the seals being used were virtual duplicates of one another. Only the inclusion of an inscription on the seal could safely identify a seal as belonging to a particular individual or official of an institution.

There are differences in the way seals were used on the same type of document at different places: compare J. Renger's general statements on legal practice with R. Whiting's particular case at Eshnunna. For some periods and some groups of tablets it can be determined who used a seal, when he or she did so in a transaction, why he or she did and someone else did not. In these instances, one can see more than an individual's identifying himself: one can glimpse part of the social organization and formal and informal relationships that bound together ancient society. Especially in Ur III texts, one can trace the elements of the bureaucracy that produced the tablets as records of transactions and then used seals to certify them. One can show that higher officials sealed and okayed the acts of lower officials (see Steinkeller). Political careers can be reconstructed to some extent through a study of different titles and different seals for specific individuals. It should be possible, on the basis of seal inscriptions and tablets, to work out the organizational framework within institutions, such as temples or palaces, and the relationship of institutions to one another. However, little has been done along this line so far. Hallo and Buchanan have published articles on the seals of one family of officials connected with the Inanna temple at Nippur, showing hereditary offices and change of status indicated by inscriptional changes in seals.<sup>6</sup> Their articles are based on some jar sealings found among dozens of objects and tablets on the floor of the Ur III Inanna temple at Nippur. A careful study of this phase of the temple,<sup>7</sup> taking into account all objects, pottery, and tablets might permit a reconstruction of the administrative setup within this institution, which was an economic unit as well as a religious one. It should be possible to say who sealed what, for whom, and who received what commodities. One might be able, also, to determine what sort of jar was used to transport or store certain items and to correlate specific jar-types with sealed stoppers. However, there are difficulties here. In looking over a selection of about a hundred jar sealings from Nippur, I was able to find only a few that could be fitted definitely with a particular type of jar. Usually, the sealings and stoppers were for small-mouthed containers, like bottles, but a study of pottery contemporary with the impressions yielded almost no small-mouthed vessels. Besides the fact that stoppers often seem not to correspond with known pottery vessels, some of the sealed clay lumps appear to have been pressed onto reeds, leaving one to wonder what was being sealed. Clearly, a systematic collection and analysis of sealings and stoppers is needed.

Anyone studying tablets and sealed objects found in stratified contexts has an opportunity to do innovative work. The palace at Mari, with its hundreds of tablets, could yield valuable information on functions of various areas, courts, rooms, and so on.<sup>8</sup> R. Whiting is currently engaged in an analysis of the 1200 or more tablets from the Gimilsin Temple at Eshnunna. Because this building was well excavated and recorded,<sup>9</sup> he should be able to reconstruct not only the economic and ritual life of this temple-palace, but also the organization that served it. His contribution in this volume indicates the detailed information that can be expected.

Even when tablets are lacking, it may be possible to discriminate between levels or compartments within an ancient bureaucracy. W. L. Rathje, with the aid of statistical tests, suggests that the objects found in burials in the Royal Cemetery at Ur were not random inclusions, but indicated status and tell something about roles in society.

The study of social and economic life in ancient times is relatively new. It can be said that except for legal history, there is not in ancient Near Eastern studies a very sophisticated body of theory or methodology for dealing with institutions and bureaucracies. We have some extensive work on restricted bodies of material, such as the so-called Cappadocian texts.<sup>10</sup> These records of Old Assyrian trade colonies in Anatolia have allowed reconstructions of the internal workings of the trade itself, and the grouping of individuals into trading families, but they could yield much more. When knowledge of texts is coupled with an appreciation of the theoretical range of methods for capitalization and the variety of organizational possibilities, pieces of information fall into patterns. M. Trolle Larsen has such a breadth of view-point, and his contribution is a tour de force. He shows that conclusions can be reached on the relationship of colonies to the home city, Assur, to the Anatolian rulers, and to the local population in general. Likewise, the relationship of family companies to one another and to other forms of corporations, or of companies to the religious and royal elements in Assur can be sketched. It is clear that to Larsen the seal impressions on a tablet are essential to his understanding of the documents and the system they reflect.

J. Renger, in his paper, also draws upon a body of theory outside his immediate field when he examines the legal uses of seals. He concludes that in Mesopotamia seal impressions were not binding signatures but only served to authenticate documents. Although wide-ranging, his paper is basically an introduction showing the way to further investigations. We have here a compilation of sealing practices and information on the concept of law in Mesopotamia, plus ideas on legal persons. It can now be asked why there were different practices at different places within one period, or differences from period to period. What are the implications behind the fact that certain people could use a seal, or needed to do so, while others could not or did not?

I. J. Gelb's contribution, a listing of seals by type of information given in their inscriptions, may help to answer those questions. Included in his tables are seals of individuals, but it is not yet clear whether individuals acted only for themselves, for organizations of which they were representatives, or at least for families. There were persons who definitely sealed on behalf of some organization or person, e.g., palace, temple, king, governor, and their seals state the relationship. Some of the seals Gelb lists (Types II, XVI last two items, XX, XXVII) were clearly not actual seals of the gods or temples, but were votive objects. In other categories, where the seal is carved in such a way that it must be read on the stone itself, in positive (rather than in reverse so that it can be read only when rolled out), the items probably also should be considered as votive objects. Such a "seal" is the one carved for a goddess by a seal cutter (A-2). Similarly, an extraordinary eight-sided prism (Gelb's Type XXIX, 4th item)<sup>11</sup> that has in positive on the stone "seal of the message of the king" (Gelb, above p. 110, translates "the royal seal of authority") and is often taken to be the seal of the Royal Mail Service, was, I would submit, never intended to be rolled out, nor was it for a mail service. I would suggest that it was carried by special messengers from the king when the message was considered too sensitive to commit to writing. The messenger would have carried the seal as a sign that the verbal message was authentic. I would also agree with R. Zettler that some Sargonic (2334-2100 B.C.) tablet-shaped clay objects with seal impressions but no inscription served a like function.

Zettler's paper brings up a new subject for consideration. He argues that there was a Sargonic royal style of seal and that certain seals were given by a king to his officials. Zettler chooses to translate a line of inscription on these seals as "his servant/slave" rather than "your servant/slave." One has the choice because the signs can be read either as Akkadian, giving "his servant," or as Sumerian, resulting in "your servant."<sup>12</sup> The reading and translation of this phrase is important because it implies, I think, something significant about the relationship of the seal-holder to the king or other person he served. With the translation "his" the seal inscription can be interpreted as a statement of relationship alone, just as would a letterhead stating "Franklin D. Roosevelt, President; Cordell Hull, Secretary of State" on an official document. It is not necessary, given this reading, to see any dedicative or votive aspect in the seals. Sargonic seals with this type of inscription have sometimes been grouped with Ur III seals under the heading "dedicatory," implying an attitude on the part of the Sargonic officials that they may not have had. The Ur III kings, considered divine in their lifetime, may very well have had seals dedicated

to them, and the Sumerian inscriptions which *must* be translated as “your servant” would indicate that they had. However, until proven otherwise, such concepts regarding most of the kings of Akkad ought not be assumed.

J. Franke, in her consideration of Ur III and later seals that were definitely, as stated in the inscription, presented (in-na-ba) by kings to officials, follows much the same thinking as Zettler, even to the suggestion that specific individuals were being portrayed in the seal scene. By showing the official standing before the king, not only was the relationship to the king being graphically illustrated, but the official was being legitimated in all actions. There ought now to be an investigation of the relationship of officials who bore such seals to contemporaries who had “your servant” seals. We may be dealing here with different orders in a hierarchy as Nissen suggests for earlier material.

The relationship of individuals to royal organizations is taken up by Whiting. Not only does he discuss officials acting for the palace, but he also touches upon the relationship of individual persons or family heads to the royal establishment. Whiting notes that at Eshnunna, as in a few other cities, people with property often resorted to using a “burgul seal.” By this term is meant a seal made quickly by the burgul (seal cutter) in connection with a single transaction. Since the seal was to be used only once, it could be made of cheap material, such as baked clay,<sup>13</sup> and bear only the inscription. Whiting and Renger discuss this type of seal in their papers, and it is unnecessary to say much more about it. It should be emphasized that in instances where all the parties to a transaction were listed on one burgul seal, it might include someone who already had a seal, but usually such seals were made for persons who did not have one. We can assume that most people in ancient Mesopotamia did not need a seal, there being few instances in their lives when they would be called on to seal anything. Clearly in certain periods, for example when it was necessary only to press one’s garment hem or thumbnail into the document (see Renger), the seal itself was not as important as the *act* of sealing. This fits into the legal context described by Renger—sealing itself was secondary to the fact that witnesses were present at and saw a transaction.

In periods when the inscription on a seal was of paramount importance, the scene on the seal might vary according to the whim of the individual, or conversely might be standardized to the point of tedium. The former alternative may bear on E. Porada’s non-professional seal cutters, while the latter possibility seems to explain the repetitiousness of Ur III and Isin-Larsa seals. Conversely, in legal situations when the seal itself need not be identificatory of an individual, but the act of sealing was crucial, one might expect repetition in inscription as well as seal subject. This may have been the setting for the hundreds of Old Babylonian seals with the inscription “Shamash (and) Aya.” We might better think of these more as amulets than seals. The difficult problem of votive objects, amulets in the shape of cylinder seals, and decorated beads is not taken up in these papers, but should be investigated. We would be better able to assess the role of seals if we could excise from the material those “seals” which did not function as seals.

Turning to the information given by the other participants for Achaemenid Iran and Egypt, it can be said that the group of Achaemenid tablets studied by Hallock shows a well-established, structured bureaucracy functioning at several levels with seals of office as well as of individual officials. Of all the papers in this volume, Hallock’s discussion of the Persepolis Fortification tablets, delves most deeply into actual bureaucratic practice, naming names and places and sketching out areas of responsibility both organizational and geographical. His superb contribution is approached in depth only by Larsen’s presentation on the Old Assyrian trading colonies. Hallock does not touch upon legal or other uses of seals, or even on the sealings that were used to safeguard commodities, except indirectly or as mentioned in his tablets. However, what he does provide on administration is an indication of the sort of synthesis that can be presented using similar material from other Near Eastern archives.

The two papers on Egypt (Williams and Johnson) overlap at many points, since they use the same sources. Williams’ piece is more general and traces seals from early cylinders, perhaps influenced by seals from Mesopotamia, to the adoption and development of scarabs. Seals were used in Egypt primarily to safeguard

objects, in much the same way as was done in Mesopotamia. Having papyrus, the Egyptians did not use seals directly on documents, but did bind some documents and used sealed clay on the strings. There were royal and official seals, and even seals of forts and other places. Apparently originally restricted to government use, sealing eventually came to be done by individuals. In the Middle Kingdom, scarabs and cylinders were used as funerary objects, but later even these “amulets” were reused for sealing. The inscription on a seal seems not to have mattered. The seal was used to certify that containers and other objects had not been tampered with, not to authenticate a document or to make a signature.

J. Johnson deals with one part of the span (Middle Kingdom) covered by Williams and discusses the appearance of individuals and their titles on seals at a time when most seals were not individuated. She points out that these “named” seals were very few in relation to the others, and concludes that their appearance is connected with a change in religious thought and the development of a highly organized, hierarchical central government bureaucracy. It may be that she is describing something along the lines of Nissen’s proposal in which seals demarcated levels of responsibility in a hierarchy.

Viewing all the contributions to this volume, one can say that for Mesopotamia we have obtained a general view of sealing practice, especially in the earlier periods, and some rather detailed information on legal practice through the Seleucid era. Besides the legal information, it can be seen that seals were used within state and temple bureaucracies, but were also part of the record-keeping and safeguarding equipment of some private persons. Seals safeguarded goods transported from place to place, or stored in depots. They certified written records of commodities and protected the officials who did the sealing. Counter-sealing by higher officials also safeguarded the lower official. The use by private individuals of seals seems to have been, in at least some instances, as formalized as was sealing within bureaucracies. In general, it might be said that sealing was intended to keep people honest and was in essence regulatory. The fact that there were back-up systems, such as the primacy of witnesses in legal situations and methods for dealing with lost seals, indicates that the regulatory aspect of sealing had its flaws.

For the Egyptian and Persepolis material, it can be said that sealing had the same basic function as in Mesopotamia, namely safeguarding property and, it may be assumed, keeping individuals honest. In the Egyptian evidence, and in the Persepolis tablets considered here, there is no indication of a legal function for seals. This does not mean that they might not have had such a use in Egypt and Iran, but we have no information on this aspect.

The contributions in this volume will, I hope, give the reader some notion of the possibilities for research when archaeological and philological approaches are combined. Scholars not familiar with Near Eastern studies may find it puzzling that such combined studies are not routinely done. It should be explained that although the study of ancient written evidence and Near Eastern archaeology have been going on for over a century, there has been a gulf between the philologist and the archaeologist. Especially in Mesopotamia, the documents have for the most part been considered for their lexicographical, legal, literary or other import and as examples of genres rather than as artifacts to be related to other objects found in the same context. Often, documents found together have not been treated as one archive, but have been separated according to type. Even when they were treated as an archive, the information extracted from them has not gone much beyond a superficial outline of the internal organization of the institution being recorded or the minutiae of operations involved in the business being recorded. It must be emphasized that in many cases context for tablets could not be specified, since many came from illicit digging and the antiquities market and only internal evidence could specify that they came even from one city. However, with documents found in controlled excavation, context must be considered and often has not been. This ignoring of context is as much the archaeologist’s fault as the philologist’s. Even when clay tablets have been carefully recorded by findspot, they have often been turned over to a cuneiform scholar and the archaeologist has ignored them in his analysis of the excavation. It has not helped matters that cuneiformists, and I assume other philologists, do not usually translate the simpler administrative/economic texts that the archaeologist would find most interesting for his reconstructions. As a by-product of the

lack of communication, seal impressions on tablets are even now sometimes ignored in text editions, or only the inscriptional portion is treated, or the notation "seal" is put on the text copy but no drawing or photo is given. Likewise, stylistic studies of impressions on tablets will present photos or drawings of the impression, but ignore what the tablet says, with the exception of the date which allows a re-evaluation of the introduction of a style.

These papers demonstrate the richness of understanding that can result from consideration of sealing in its context. If through reading these contributions others are made sensitive to the need for cooperation between the archaeologist and the philologist, for a consideration of sealing as an integral part of a document, and vice versa, this volume may be judged to have served a useful function. But its value should be more than that. It is to be hoped that others will be stimulated to do similar analyses on related or different material and that the ancient Near East will become a focus for true social history rather than an amalgam of details, dynasties and dates gathered for no apparent reason other than completeness.

#### NOTES

1. Denise Schmandt-Besserat, "The Use of Clay Before Pottery in the Zagros," *Expedition 16* (1974), pp. 11-17, has recently attempted to place these balls in the wider context of pre-literate accounting practice in the Near East. Others, e.g., P. Amiet, *Glyptique Susienne* (MDP 43, 1972), p. 69 and elsewhere, have also called the objects inside the balls "calculi" and accounting devices. The problem now is to decide whether the calculi are numbers only, or include along with the numbers some indication of kind of commodity, or whether the balls, being bureaucratic devices, need have only numbers and the seal of a specific office or official because the office dealt only with specific commodities. Do the scenes on the seals indicate the nature of the office or commodity?
2. *Cylinder Seals*, pp. 2-3.
3. The excavations in the Diyala region formed the basis for Frankfort's *Cylinder Seals and his Stratified Seals*.
4. W. H. Ward, *The Seal Cylinders of Western Asia* (Washington, D.C., 1910), p. 2.
5. There is a great deal of imprecision and a source of possible confusion in the terminology used to describe seals and the practice of sealing. The term "bulla" probably should be restricted to the small, round lumps of clay found in Hellenistic and Roman times and used around parchment. However, this term has come to be used for just about any sort of clay lump that has a seal impression on it. The term "sealing" is, in general, any lump of clay with an impression, and is thus for some authors a synonym for "bulla," but it is also used to denote the seal impression alone, and the clay that seals a jar. The term "seal impression" can be used for the same range of meaning as "sealing" and "bulla," not just the mark made by the seal. Modern rollings of seals are also termed "impressions." Tags and labels are fairly restricted in range of meaning, but may be called bullae, sealings, or impressions. We have tried to eliminate confusion brought about by the different uses of these terms, and to make the papers conform in usage.
6. W. W. Hallo, "The House of Ur-Meme," *JNES* 31 (1972), pp. 87-95; A. Buchanan, "An Extraordinary Seal Impression of the Third Dynasty of Ur," *ibid.*, pp. 96-101.
7. The seals and objects from the Inanna temple were to be published by D. P. Hansen and G. Dales. R. C. Haines was preparing the volume on architecture and general features at the time of his death in early 1977. Responsibility for parts of the material is being reassigned.
8. For the building, see A. Parrot, *Mission Archéologique de Mari 2, Le Palais* (Institut Français d'Archéologie de Beyrouth, Bibliothèque archéologique et historique, vols. 68, 69, 70 [Paris, 1958]). Tablets are published in ARM. Even with the incomplete listing of loci in the text publications, it is possible to suggest that certain areas in this palace were used exclusively or predominantly for specific activities.

9. H. Frankfort, S. Lloyd, and T. Jacobsen, *The Gimilsin Temple and the Palace of the Rulers at Tell Asmar* (OIP 43 [Chicago, 1940]).
10. See M. T. Larsen in this volume for references.
11. Published, among other places, in Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals*, pl. 36:k.
12. For further discussion, see I. J. Gelb in this volume.
13. Two examples of burgul seals of baked clay have been found at Nippur. Both bear the name Naramtum, a feminine name (AS 17, nos. 13 and 53), but they belonged to two different individuals. Both seals are cylinders, not stamps, and are not pierced. R. T. Hallock has shown me a burgul seal from Adab, now in the Oriental Institute collection. This unique seal is cut into a potsherd. Unfortunately, time did not allow for including it in this volume, but it is to be hoped that Professor Hallock will publish it elsewhere.

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- C-10 Impression made with a seal given by Kirikiri to Wusumbeli, a singer. As. 31-T 422
- C-11 a Rolling of a seal presented by Ur-Ningishzida, ruler of Eshnunna, to his son, Irrabani. OIP 43, p. 113, published originally in Moortgat, Rollsiegel, no. 254.  
 b Drawing of an impression from Susa of a seal presented by Idadu to Kuk-Simut. RA 22 (1925), p. 148.
- C-12 a Impression of a seal given by Ibal-pi-El to his wife at Eshnunna. As. 30-T 119.  
 b Drawing of a, by J. Franke.
- D-1 Bead given by king Shilhak-Inshushinak to his daughter. E. Sollberger, JCS 19, p. 31, BM 113886.
- D-2 **Whiting**
- D-3 a Obverse of an Eshnunna real estate tablet. As. 30-T 542.  
 b Reverse of an Eshnunna real estate tablet. As. 30-T 528.
- D-4 Fragment of the reverse of an Eshnunna real estate tablet. As. 30-T 551.
- D-5 **Renger**
- D-6 a-e Old Babylonian legal text inside envelope, from Nippur, various views. BE 6/1, pl. IV.
- D-7 Old Babylonian legal text from Nippur with its envelope sealed by witnesses. BE 6/2, pl. II.
- D-8 a Burgul seal from Nippur and a rolling made from it. Oriental Institute Nippur Expedition, 8 NT 17, published as AS 17, no. 13.  
 b Old Babylonian contract from Nippur showing impression of cloth on the left edge. Elizabeth Stone and Paul Zimansky, Old Babylonian Contracts from Nippur, vol. 1, Selected Texts from the University Museum (Chicago, 1976), no. 35.
- D-9 a-b Tablet from Nuzi with its envelope. Oriental Institute A 11878 A-B.
- D-10 a-d Impressions of stamp and cylinder seals on Neo-Babylonian tablets from Nippur. BE 8, pl. VI.
- D-11 a-f Neo-Babylonian tablets from Nippur with finger-nail impressions on the edges. BE 8, pl. V.
- D-12 a Seleucid tablet with seal impressions and byscripts. Oriental Institute A 2518.  
 b Seleucid bulla with several seal impressions. Oriental Institute A 3745.
- E-1 **Hallock**
- E-2 Typical sealed tablet with seal from the Persepolis fortification archive. Oriental Institute.
- E-3 Impressions of Seal 7, a royal seal. Oriental Institute.
- E-4 Impression of Seal 66, a royal seal. Oriental Institute.
- E-5 a-b Impressions of Seal 93, a royal seal. Oriental Institute.
- E-6 Impression of Seal 9, first seal of Pharnaces. Oriental Institute.
- E-7 Impression of Seal 16, later seal of Pharnaces. Oriental Institute.
- E-8 Impression of Seal 83, first seal of Zisshawish. Oriental Institute.
- E-9 Impression of Seal 11, later seal of Zisshawish. Oriental Institute.
- E-10 Impression of Gobryas' seal. Oriental Institute.

- E-11 Impression of Seal 1. Oriental Institute.  
 E-12 Impression of Seal 3. Oriental Institute.  
 F-1 Impression of Seal 4. Oriental Institute.  
 F-2 a-c Tablet with three different seal impressions (Category C-1). Oriental Institute.
- F-3 **Williams**
- F-4 a-d Drawings by H. J. Kantor of Jamdat Nasr-like cylinder seals found in Egypt, R. W. Ehrich, ed., *Chronologies in Old World Archaeology* (Chicago, 1965), p. 31, fig. 8.
- F-5 a Petrie, RT 1, pl. 14, fig. 98.  
 b Ibid., pl. 21, fig. 29.  
 c Ibid., pl. 25, fig. 56.
- F-6 a Petrie, RT 1, pl. 14, fig. 104.  
 b Ibid., pl. 13, fig. 96.  
 c Reisner, Giza 2, fig. 47.  
 d Ibid., fig. 54.
- F-7 Abu Ghalib (1936-37), fig. 11.
- F-8 Abydos 3, pl. 39, figs. 1-15.
- F-9 a Petrie, Scarabs and Cylinders, pl. 1, fig. 20.  
 b Ibid., pl. 2, fig. 33.  
 c Ibid., pl. 2, fig. 49.
- F-10 a Qau and Badari 1, pl. 32, fig. 47.  
 b Ibid., fig. 22.  
 c Ibid., fig. 58.  
 d Ibid., fig. 55.  
 e Ibid., fig. 50.  
 f Ibid., pl. 34, fig. 204.
- F-11 a Sealing with name and location. Emery, *Tombs of the First Dynasty* 2, p. 116, fig. 151.  
 b Ibid., fig. 150.
- F-12 **Johnson**
- G-1 a-b Seal of W3h. Metropolitan Museum of Art 40.3. 12 (= Martin, pl. 47A, figs. 4-5).  
 c James, Hekanakhte Papers, pl. 9, fig. 3.
- G-2 Martin, pl. 43, fig. 1.

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## Abbreviations

### List of Abbreviations not found in the Chicago Assyrian Dictionary:

Amiet, Glyptique	P. Amiet, <i>La Glyptique mésopotamienne archaïque</i> (Paris, 1961).
Boehmer, Glyptik	R. M. Boehmer, <i>Die Entwicklung der Glyptik während der Akkad-Zeit</i> (Berlin, 1969).
de Clercq, Collection	L. de Clercq, <i>Collection de Clercq, catalogue méthodique et raisonné . . . vol. 1, Cylindres orientaux</i> (Paris, 1888).
Frankfort, Cylinder Seals	H. Frankfort, <i>Cylinder Seals</i> (London, 1939).
Frankfort, Stratified Cylinder Seals	H. Frankfort, <i>Stratified Cylinder Seals from the Diyala Region</i> , OIP 72 (Chicago, 1955).
Moortgat, Rollsiegel	A. Moortgat, <i>Vorderasiatische Rollsiegel</i> (Berlin, 1940).
von der Osten, Newell	H. H. von der Osten, <i>Ancient Oriental Seals in the Collection of Mr. Edward T. Newell</i> , OIP 22 (Chicago, 1934).
Porada, Corpus	E. Porada, <i>Corpus of Ancient Near Eastern Seals in North American Collections</i> , vol. 1 (New York, 1948).
SAOC	<i>Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilizations</i> (Chicago, 1932-).
Speleers, Cat. des int.	Louis Speleers, <i>Catalogue des intailles et empreintes orientales des Musées Royaux du Cinquantenaire</i> (Brussels, 1917).
Woolley, Alalakh	<i>Alalakh: An Account of the Excavations at Tell Atchana . . .</i> (Oxford, 1955).

### Other frequently used symbols:

DN	divine name
GN	geographical name
PN	personal name
RN	royal name