

Clay Tablets in the Collection of the National Postal Museum, Ottawa

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Among the small collections of clay tablets in Canada are four tablets located in the National Postal Museum, Ottawa. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Professor A.K. Grayson of the University of Toronto for bringing these tablets to my attention, and to Mr James Brennan of the National Postal Museum for permission to publish them. I also wish to thank Professor R.F.G. Sweet of the University of Toronto for assistance in difficult readings in the Ur-III case-tablet, and Mr Alan Hollett, Technician, Egyptian Department, Royal Ontario Museum, for his photographic expertise.

The four tablets were acquired at various times through purchase from dealers. The first, a beautifully preserved Old Assyrian letter, was published in 1930 by Julius Lewy in *Die Kültepetexte aus der Sammlung Frida Hahn*, Berlin, no. 18. Two of the tablets, not previously published, deserve mention, but until they are properly cleaned and conserved it will be impossible to read the texts for accurate copying. The first is an undated Ur-III or early Old Babylonian list of animals, both domesticated and non-domesticated. The text is in about ten sections, each consisting of two or three lines giving various numbers of particular animals and one line giving only the total number of animals in the preceding lines. The second tablet is a Neo-Babylonian debt receipt dated to the reign of Nebuchadnezzar.

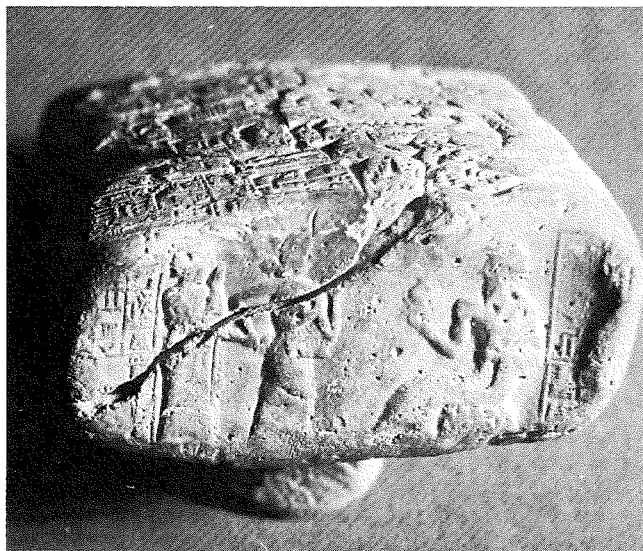
The fourth tablet in the collection is a well-preserved Ur-III receipt, dated in the fourth year of Amar-Sîn. The case measures approximately 5.5 × 4.5 × 2.5 cm, and the tablet 3.9 × 3.4 × 1.5 cm. Both are a light pinkish buff in colour. When the tablet came into my hands it was enclosed in a case, of which only a small fragment of one corner was broken away. Permission was obtained from the National Postal Museum to remove the case, and this was carried out with the greatly appreciated assistance of Professors Sweet and Grayson of the University of Toronto. Mr Alan Hollett of the Royal Ontario Museum photographed each step of this exciting process, as the little clay document was removed from its envelope for the first time in over four thousand years. The envelope, which broke away in fairly large pieces, was then partially reassembled for museum display.

The text is a receipt for offering-lambs from the city of Uruk, dated in the fourth regnal year of the king Amar-Sîn (c. 2043 B.C.; *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*, sub 'Datenlisten'). The case is inscribed with an exact duplicate of the tablet contents, but the surface has been considerably smoothed and distorted by sealings. The tablet itself had a small amount of salt encrustation; light brushing was sufficient to render the tablet clearly legible. The scene on the seal is a standard presentation motif, and is reproduced here only in photograph. The brief inscription, which is broken every time it occurs, reads:

[a]mar- ^{EN} .ZU	lugal dingir [. . .]
[luga]l kala-ga	x x [. . .]
[lugal ŒE]Š-AB	x x [. . .]
[k]i-ma	x x

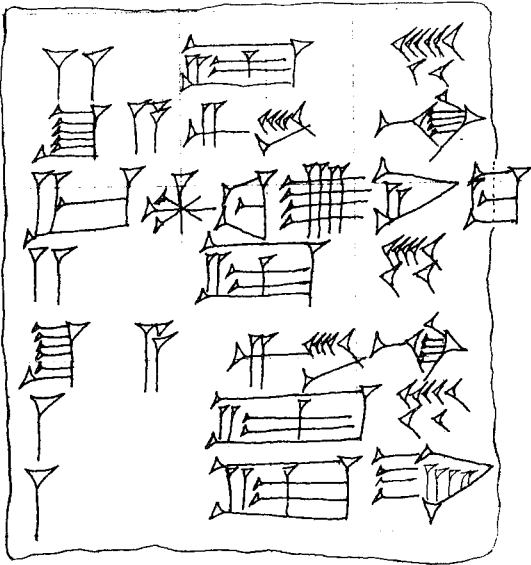
Amar-Sîn, the mighty king, the king of Ur, the king of . . .

The last two lines of the right-hand side presumably contained the name of the owner of the seal, but unfortunately are broken or too faint to read whenever they appear. The text of the tablet (and case) is as follows:



Tablet

Obverse



- 1) 2 síla-niga
- 2) šu-a-gi-na
- 3) ur-^aba-ú ì-díb
- 4) 2 síla-niga
- 5) šu-a-gi-na
- 6) 1 síla-niga
- 7) 1 síla-ga
- 8) kú-dè-šè
- 9) nì-diri
- 10) a-a-kal-la ì-díb
- 11) sá-dug₄-lugal
- 12) ša tum-ma-al
- 13) ki en-dingir-mu-ta
- 14) ba-zi
- 15) iti ezen-maḥ ì-díb
- 16) mu en-maḥ-gal-an-na
- 17) en dingir-šeš-ki ba-ḥun

2 barley-fattened lambs
for the regular offering
Ur-bau received.

2 barley-fattened lambs
for the regular offering,
1 barley-fattened lamb,
1 suckling lamb

for eating,

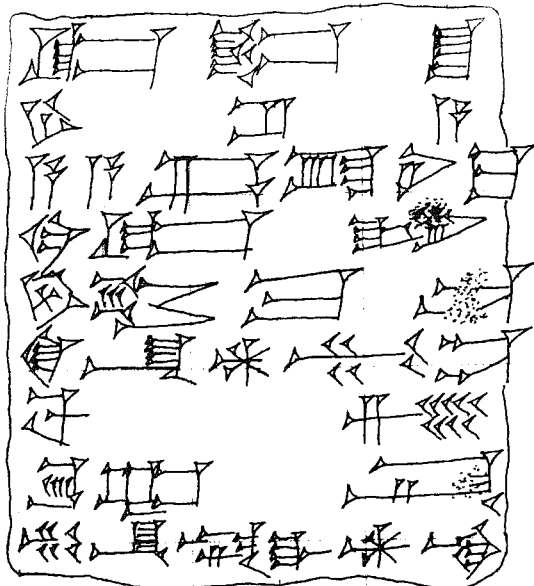
an additional thing,
Ayya-kalla received.

The regular offering of the king
in Tummal
was received
from En-dingir-mu.

In the month of 'The Great Festival' he received (it).

In the year when Enmaḥgalanna was chosen to be the entu-
priestess of Nanna.

Reverse



Bottom edge

