

A Shamshi-ilu Dedication

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BM 89106 (84-2-11,490)

Inscribed rock-crystal bead. Length 2.3 cm, maximum diameter 1.3 cm. Purchased from Spartali & Co., among a large collection of Babylonian tablets. The bead was presumably deposited at Aššur in the temple of the god Aššur, from which it may have been removed at any date in antiquity or later; Hormuzd Rassam's workmen were there in 1878-1879.

The inscription (Figure 1), cut with a drill, reads:

TRANSLITERATION

- 1) *ana aš-šur bēli(UMUN)-šú*
- 2) ^{md}*šamši(UTU)-ilu(DINGIR)*
- 3) ^{lú}*tar-ta-nu*
- 4) *ana balāti(TI)-šú iqīš(BA)*

TRANSLATION

Shamshi-ilu, the *tartanu*, (as a safeguard) for his life, dedicated (this object) to his lord Aššur.

COMMENTARY

The dedicant of this bead (or larger object to which the bead belonged) can be none other than the celebrated Shamshi-ilu who is attested in office as *tartanu* during at least 780-752 BC, and who was virtual ruler of Assyria's western provinces. For references, and a hypothetical reconstruction of his background, see now A. Lemaire and J.-M. Durand, *Les inscriptions araméennes de Sfiré et l'Assyrie de Shamshi-ilu* (Paris, 1984). The existence of the bead raises the question of whether there was any restriction on the kind of person entitled to make dedications of this type to Aššur.

For the drawing of the shape of the bead (Figure 2) I am indebted to Ann Searight.

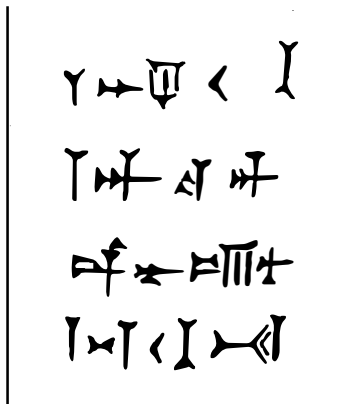


Figure 1
Crude drill-cut text on BM 89106
Scale 2:1

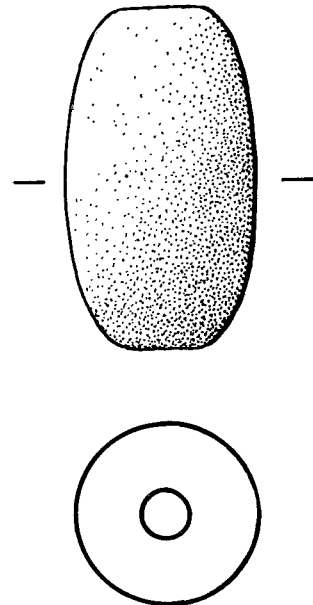


Figure 2
Drawing and section of BM 89106
Scale 2:1