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## Foreword

In 1991 Sass wrote to the Vorderasiatisches Museum, asking if the museum had a photograph of a Babylonian brick impression from which a drawing of the Aramaic legend was published in MDOG 6 (Koldewey 1900c, 3; fig. 693 herein). He in due course received a photograph showing a brick fragment, now our no. 84.4, with the clipped images of two more fragments. He wrote again, asking for a contact print of the entire negative, which turned out to contain the images of not two but three more items (nos. 78.1, 78.2 and 86). He then sent a third letter (it was just before the days of the email), this time to Marzahn, asking how many such bricks the museum possessed, and Marzahn wrote back that this was an interesting question; he assumed about a hundred, but would soon check. Two weeks later he had a list of over 200 impressed bricks. (The number was to grow to 226, somewhere between 326 and 386 with the items not in Berlin; see pp. 187–188) Sass' questions had to do with the "Corpus of West Semitic stamp seals" (WSS, appeared 1997), with which he was occupied at the time. The quantity reported by Marzahn made it clear that the Aramaic brick impressions from Babylon, unpublished as most of them were, could not be incorporated in WSS but merited an independent study. A publication was also foreseen by the museum for some time, and following a staff meeting held in 1992 we accepted the task, herewith accomplished.

The chapters and sections on the cuneiform impressions are chiefly by Marzahn, and on the Aramaic and figural impressions essentially by Sass, yet each of us was also involved in the other's work. The drawings of the cuneiform impressions are by Marzahn, and of the Aramaic and figural impressions by Noga Z'evi (see pp. 17–18). The new photographs and the digitalization of all illustrations are by Sass.

Our warm thanks to the staff of the Vorderasiatisches Museum for their invaluable help over many years, and in particular to storage administrators Hendrik Baernighausen and Hans Nohka. Further to

trainees Erika Fischer and Anais Schuster, who in 1992 and 1993 helped to prepare the preliminary museum catalogues of our bricks.

In 1994 at the Philadelphia University Museum one of us (Sass) was shown Cat. 42 by Maude de Schauensee and permitted to photograph it. In 1996 in the Istanbul Archaeological Museums, thanks to the generosity of Dr Halil Özek, then acting director, he was shown the inventory cards and photographs of several bricks with Aramaic impressions kept in storage in the museum. In 2005, 2007 and 2008 he was permitted to study and photograph several bricks at the British Museum, and his task was greatly facilitated by Dr Dominique Collon and Paul Collins.

Baruch Brandl, André Lemaire, Stefan Maul, Tallay Ornan and Elnatan Weissert have kindly given their advice. Special thanks are due to Ran Zadok, who was always ready to share his vast knowledge, and during two long sessions in 2005 went over the personal names in Chapter 7 and made innumerable, enlightening suggestions.

We are indebted to the members of the German Babylon expedition of 1899–1917; the names of the individuals who did the registering and took photographs and squeezes are mostly unknown to us. The Jerusalem photographers Zev Radovan and Shimon Z'evi have printed the majority of our new photographs; this was in 1992–1996, before the age of digital photography. The layout of the book is by Peter Werner, Gladbeck. Our sincere thanks to them all.

The Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst (DAAD) gave Sass a travel grant for the project in 1993; otherwise his many trips to Berlin were supported by the University of Haifa until 1997, and afterwards by Tel Aviv University. Marzahn's trips to Israel in 1999 and 2006 were funded by Tel Aviv University.

The book was published with the generous support of the Israel Science Foundation, the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft and the School of Judaic Studies at Tel Aviv University.

## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

The description of previous work on the bricks from Babylon and of our own work (pp. 12–18) is preceded by a short survey of the practice of inscribing and impressing bricks in Mesopotamia.

#### 1.1. Inscribed and impressed bricks in Mesopotamia

**Brick inscriptions.** The phenomenon of bricks inscribed in cuneiform by hand is first documented in Mesopotamia in the Early Dynastic period (ED II) with the bricks of Ur-nanshe king of Lagash (25th century B.C.). The bricks constitute only a part, if a significant one, of the so-called building inscriptions in the public structures in Lagash. The script followed the model of the stone inscriptions, so that the signs have a linear, incised appearance. It was only gradually that the script of the brick inscriptions assumed the usual wedge form, yet the ductus still followed the monumental shape of the stone inscriptions. The transition to wedge-shaped signs is first apparent slightly later, in the script on Brick B of Eannatum, King of Lagash (King 1910, figure following p. 154). When brick impressions begin in the Akkad period (see below), the custom of inscribing bricks continues alongside them into the first millennium.

**Brick impressions: cuneiform.**<sup>1</sup> Impressions on bricks appear first in the Akkad period (c 23rd century) (fig. 1). The signs on the brick-stamps likewise imitate the

shape of the monumental inscriptions, but occasionally they assume a ‘block’ appearance, no doubt due to the manufacturing technique of the stamps. The introduction of the brick-stamp led to a massive increase in building inscriptions, and impressed bricks are employed in great numbers since the Ur III period (see further Marzahn 2004, 84–86). This practice continued until the end of the cuneiform culture, yet the nature of the excavators’ publication of such bricks not always permits an insight into their actual frequency at a given place. To a certain extent this is true in respect to Babylon as well, though here the documentation is more extensive than at other excavated sites.

The texts are typically royal; as a rule they are only a few lines long. Habitually their character is commemorative, but at times they contain literary elements. Most of these inscriptions are hidden inside walls, hence intended to inform the gods and posterity (i.e. future restorers) about the builder and his deeds, motivated by piety. For Middle and Late Assyrian brick-impressions from Assur, mostly royal but also two non-royal ones, see Maul 2000a.

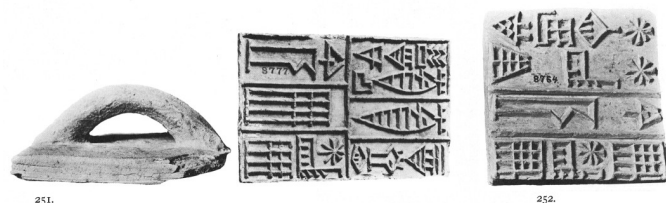


Fig. 1. Brick-stamps, Nippur, Akkad period (ANEP 251, 252).

<sup>1</sup> Impressions are sometimes labelled “stamps” in the literature. We distinguished consistently between the object used for stamping, the stamp, known to us only indirectly for the Aramaic and figural items, and the result of the stamping, the impression, visible on the bricks.



Fig. 2. Impressed brick from Nimrud (Curtis and Reade 1995, no. 60).

**Brick impressions: figural.** Purely figural impressions are much rarer; mostly they do not accompany cuneiform impressions but appear alone on the bricks, and this primarily in the first millennium. Such were found on a brick from the temple of Nabû at Nimrud (ND 6216, BM 132263), probably from the reign of Aššur-etel-ilāni (630–627), showing a mušḫuššu supporting the symbols of Marduk and Nabû facing a rhomb (fig. 2; Nimrud I, 643; Curtis and Reade 1995, no. 60; Oates and Oates 2001, 220). Bricks from the same site, “used almost certainly by Esarhaddon in the conversion of SW 5 into a residential suite”, bear impressions depicting a lion (Oates and Oates, *loc. cit.*). Bricks with figural impressions were discovered also at Khorsabad (Khorsabad II, 14, and pl. 65), and the excavators emphasized their rarity. The motifs include a bull.

An unprovenanced Nebuchadnezzar brick from Babylonia, but apparently not from Babylon – London, BM 90091 (formerly the Claude Steuart collection, purchased in 1841) – “has an almost square stamp (4.0 × 3.0 [inches]) on one edge with a badly worn picture of an animal (lion/bull?)” (Walker 1981, 81–82, 147).

Figural, anepigraphic brick impressions depicting a lion are known from Susa (Dieulafoy 1893, 431, fig. 287; Hesse 1973). For more first-millennium examples see Sauvage 1998, 38–47, 147–151, 300–317.<sup>2</sup>

**Brick impressions: Aramaic.** Brick impressions with Aramaic legends are nearly unknown outside the large group from Babylon discussed herein; the latter, moreover, seems to be confined to part of the sixth century.<sup>3</sup> On the possible logic behind such manifestly non-royal impressions see Chapter 11. A much later example comes from late Seleucid or Parthian Tell Loh: Numerous bricks with the same four-line impression in Aramaic and Greek script naming a local ruler, *hddndn’h* – Αδαδναδιναχηζ (Adad-nadin-aḥḥe), were found there (pp. 214–215).

**Brick stamps: cuneiform.** The actual stamps are obviously much rarer archaeological finds. In part this could be due to the material from which some of them were made – metal on the one hand, wood on the other. The latter material may be indicated by the occasional ‘block’ character of the signs impressed in the bricks (see p. 19, no. 1; Marzahn 2004, 85). The few preserved stamps seem all to be made of terracotta: Two third-millennium brick-stamps were found at Nippur (fig. 1). Two early-second-millennium stamps come from Uruk and Larsa. The former, not certainly for

bricks, dates possibly to Sin-kašid (van Ess 2001, 348, 354). The latter (Arnaud 1972, 35–36), has cuneiform signs that look as if made with a movable type, and impressions from Assur display the same phenomenon (Schroeder 1922). On the possible use of a movable type in cuneiform stamps at Babylon see p. 20, no. 2, and in alphabetic stamps – p. 160. A fragmentary cuneiform brick-stamp from Babylon is BM 36794.<sup>4</sup>

**Brick stamps: figural.** Identified as brick stamps by Curtis and Reade (1995, nos. 62–63) are handled bronze items from Nimrud in the shape of a simply outlined lion, possibly dating to the eighth century, yet their identification as brands seems an alternative. A potential example from Babylon is Bab. 7625, known to us only from its Fundjournal entry: “Löwenstempel aus geb. Thon(?), unvollendet” from Kasr v.26. Neither the object itself nor an excavation photograph or squeeze could be located in Berlin.

**Brick stamps: Aramaic.** None of the stamps used to impress our bricks was discovered. At Hama part of an apparent brick stamp, 12 cm across, with an Aramaic legend was found in 1931. It is an unstratified “fragment of a circular clay form; the letters stand out in relief. ... the *bet* is laterally reversed, and the clay form must have had a function as a stamp ...” (figs. 3, 4; Otzen 1990, 305). It was used to produce a sunk image of the letters as in many of the Aramaic impressions from Babylon. And the one preserved letter is similar in shape and size to many of our letters. It should be noted that at Babylon circular stamps are hardly represented at all (see nos. 18, 43 and 117), and impressions in which the text itself runs in a circle are altogether absent. And while the Hama bricks inscribed by hand in Aramaic are well known (Otzen 1990; Naveh 1970, 12), impressed bricks seem not to have been found at this site.



Fig. 3. Hama stamp (Otzen 1990, 305).

<sup>2</sup> Some, if not most of the bricks in Appendix V come from sites other than Babylon.

<sup>3</sup> No. 37, while assigned with some hesitation to the sixth century too in this book, finds parallels to its letters in the Persian period.

<sup>4</sup> Walker 1981, 83: “from Babylon”, 150: “from H. Rassam’s excavations in Babylonia.” Thanks are due to Dominique Collon who, after consulting with Christopher Walker, confirmed the former alternative (email of 22 November 2004).