Statement of Provenance

THE NEAR EASTERN PICTOGRAPHIC TABLETS, CUNEIFORM TABLETS, AND SEALS

A. Ownership History

The holdings of pictographic tablets, cuneiform tablets and seals in The Schøyen Collection were collected mainly in the late 1980s, with further items in the 1990s. They derive from a great variety of former collections and sources. It would not have been possible to collect so many items, of such major textual importance, if it had not been based on the endeavour of some of the greatest collectors in earlier times. Collections that once held tablets, and seals now in The Schøyen Collection are:

Institute of Antiquity and Christianity, Claremont Graduate School, Claremont, California (1970–94)

Erlenmeyer Collection and Foundation, Basel (1943–88)

Cumberland Clark Collection, Bournemouth, UK (1920s–1941)

Lord Amherst of Hackney, UK (1894-1909)

Crouse Collection, Hong Kong and New England (1920s–80s)

Dring Collection, Surrey, UK (1911-90)

Rihani Collection, Irbid (ca. 1935) and Amman, Jordan (before 1965–88) and London (1988–)

Lindgren Collection, San Francisco, California (1965–85)

Rosenthal Collection, San Francisco, California (1953–88)

Kevorkian Collection, New York (ca. 1930–59) and Fund (1960–77)

Kohanim Collection, Tehran, Paris and London (1959–85)

Simmonds Collection, UK (1944–87)

Schaeffer Collection, Collège de France, Zürich (1950s)

Henderson Collection, Boston, Massachusetts (1930s–50s)

Pottesman Collection, London (1904-78)

Geuthner Collection, France (1960s-80s)

Harding Smith Collection, UK (1893–1922)

Rev. Dr. W. F. Williams, Mosul (ca. 1850–60)

Frida Hahn Collection, Berlin (1925–73)

Mixon Collection, California and UK (1920s–1967) and heirs

These collections are the source of almost all the tablets and seals. Other items were acquired through Christie's and Sotheby's, where in a few cases the names of their former owners were not revealed.

The sources of the oldest collections, such as Amherst, Harding Smith, and Cumberland Clark, were antiquities' dealers who acquired tablets and seals in the Near East in the 1890s-1930s. During this period many tens of thousands of tablets came on the market: in the summers of 1893-94 alone some 30,000 tablets. While most of these were bought by museums, others were acquired by private collectors. In this way some of the older of these collections were the source of some of the later collections. For instance, a large number of the tablets in the Crouse Collection came from the Cumberland Clark, Kohanim, Amherst, and Simmonds collections. The Claremont tablets came from the Schaeffer Collection, and the Dring tablets came from the Harding Smith Collection.

B. Archaeological Provenance, Findspots

In most cases the original findspots of tablets that came on the market in the 1890s—1930s and later are unknown. Therefore great parts of the holdings of most major museums in Europe and the United States are without archaeological provenance. This

also applies to The Schøyen Collection. Based on the texts of the tablets themselves the following provenances can nevertheless be identified:

About 85% of the Early Dynastic and Old Akkadian tablets come from palace and temple archives in Adab and Umma.

About 90% of the Old Babylonian tablets come from Larsa.

The Old Assyrian tablets all come from Kanesh (Kültepe) excavation level II, mostly from Bedřich Hrozný's findspots 2, 3, 4 and 10, unearthed 1890–1925.

All Ugaritic tablets come from Ras Shamra, excavation level I, excavated under the direction of Claude Schaeffer, 1957–58.

Most Neo-Assyrian tablets come from Assur, unearthed during the German excavations under Walter Andrae, 1903–14.

From Lagash and its vicinity there are tablets from the E-Ninnu temple, Ninkar temple in Nimin, Ningishzida temple, Nindara and Ningirsu temples in Girsu, the Ur-Bau temple in Urukug, and the Inanna and Emush temples in Bad-Tibira.

From Nineveh: The Royal Library of Ashurbanipal, and the Ezida temple of Nabu.

From Nimrud: North-west palace of Ashurnasirpal II, the library of Nabû-zuqup-kena, and the palace of Sargon II.

In addition to other major sites like Ur, Uruk, Eridu, Isin, Babylon, Nippur, Susa, Persepolis, there are tablets and seals from at least thirty further sites.

Martin Schøyen

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