YOUR PRAISE IS SWEET

A MEMORIAL VOLUME FOR JEREMY BLACK
FROM STUDENTS, COLLEAGUES AND FRIENDS

Edited by
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British Institute for the Study of Iraq
2010
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By definition, a palace is the residence of persons of elevated status. Therefore access to the palace needs to be limited and controlled in order to protect the palace’s inhabitants and their belongings as well as the palace’s precious furnishings from the outside world. Following the Oriental tradition, moreover, a Neo-Assyrian palace consisted of different quarters—residential, representative and administrative—which had to be delimited from each other.

Most essential was of course the safety and the privacy of the palace’s most important occupant, the king. Many letters from the royal correspondence illustrate how secluded a life the Assyrian king led when residing in his palace. It was never easy to meet the king. Whoever wished to see him had to apply for an audience and wait until it was granted. Chance meetings were rare, and even the visits of close family relations were usually pre-arranged.

In order to control access to the palace and its various quarters, a number of means were employed. The concern for limited accessibility is reflected in the architecture of the Neo-Assyrian palaces. We may note the following general principles: the palaces were usually separated architecturally from the rest of the city; they could not be overlooked from the outside; and they had few and easily controllable entrances, both from the outside and between the different palace quarters. These entrances were equipped with one or, more commonly, two wooden door leaves which were reinforced by horizontal metal strips. With the help of these strips, the door leaves were attached to vertical door posts which turned on pivot-stones. The detailed set-up of such doors has been reconstructed from the remains of the temple doors from Imgur-Illil, modern Balawat.

Whenever deemed necessary, doors were equipped with bolts and locks. In order to protect a room from intruders, it is sufficient to bar a door from the inside with the help of a bolt. But in order to hinder somebody on the inside from leaving, a simple bolt is not enough; it has to be secured with a lock. Internal locks were installed at the exterior gates of a palace, but they may also have been deemed useful in order to lock up the women’s quarters or rooms housing guests. External locks, on the other hand, are necessary for the doors to all those quarters and rooms in which something or somebody is to be shut in without the possibility of opening the door from the inside. The most obvious example of a room for which this option was desirable is of course the

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1 As always, I owe my thanks to Simo Parpola for allowing me to use the electronic Corpus of Neo-Assyrian for the preparation of this paper, originally a contribution to the 1999 symposium ‘Palace, King and Empire’, organised by M.T. Larsen in Copenhagen. I am grateful to M. Gibson, M. Liverani, J.N. Postgate, J.E. Reade and I. Winter for their remarks on that occasion. I also wish to thank Andreas Fuchs and Heather D. Baker for commenting on earlier drafts of this paper and J. Curtis for providing me with information on a metal find from Nimrud (see footnote 7). Both A. Fuchs and J. Curtis kindly allowed me to reproduce their drawings as Fig. 1 and 2 respectively.

2 The best evidence is found in a fragmentarily preserved letter from the reign of Esarhaddon (now re-published as SAA 18 100); see Parpola 1980: 172 and 176 n. 12.

3 Hence scholars advise Esarhaddon in various letters on days that are auspicious for his sons to visit him: e.g., SAA 10 73 (visit of the crown prince), SAA 10 52 (visit of the crown prince and prince Aššur-mukin-pale’a), SAA 10 207 (visit of the princes Aššur-mukin-pale’a and Sin-per’u-uki), SAA 10 53, 70 and 74 (visits of prince Aššur-mukin-pale’a), SAA 10 54 (visit of an unknown man).

4 Cf. SAA 1 203, a list of door leaves with their measurements.

5 For an illustration of the reconstructed gates of Balawat see, e.g., Reade 1983: 23 fig. 25. For a thorough discussion of the technical aspects of ancient Near Eastern doors see Damerji 1973: 176–258.
treasury, but also storage rooms in general, armouries, libraries, prison cells and the living quarters of foreign hostages would come to mind.

Figure 1: ND 9222 (length 11.4 cm, maximum height 3.5 cm). Drawing by J. Curtis

Despite the general scarcity of metal remains from the Neo-Assyrian period, locks and parts of locks have been found in the palaces of Nineveh, Dur-Šarrukin and Kalhu. The locks from Nineveh and Dur-Šarrukin were found in the pioneer days of Near Eastern archaeology and only their descriptions by Layard and Bonomi survive; both authors compare the finds to the ‘Egyptian Lock’ which was still widely in use at that time. More recently, David and Joan Oates identified a metal find from the Review Palace (ekal maštarti = ‘Fort Shalmaneser’) at Kalhu as part of a lock. They describe the piece as ‘a thin rectangular copper object with three longitudinal slots and a protruding knob’ (Fig. 1). I would like to identify this object as the lock’s holding bar, to be used with three bolt-pins (see below). In addition, fittings for locking mechanisms can be seen in the door jambs of various gates of Neo-Assyrian palaces; the best examples are again found at the Review Palace in Kalhu, where Esarhaddon (680–669 BCE) had an elaborate gateway constructed on the southern façade whose inner and outer door could be locked.

Figure 2: Reconstruction of a Neo-Assyrian sikkatu lock

For the evidence from Nineveh see Layard 1853: 596 and from Dur-Šarrukin (Khorsabad) see Bonomi 1856: 170–1. See also the discussion of Potts 1990: 186–7.
ND 9222, found by the jamb of the west door of room NE 7, see Oates and Oates 2001: 160 with n. 23 (on p. 279). John Curtis kindly informs me that the piece has a length of 11.4 cm and a maximum height of 3.5 cm; I am grateful to him for permission to reproduce his previously unpublished drawing as Fig. 1.
A photograph of the gate is published in Mallowan 1966: II 465 fig. 379, though unfortunately the fittings are hidden behind a man standing in the doorway. The locking mechanisms have hitherto not been published in full; the most extensive description is found in Oates and Oates 2001: 154: ‘Both the inner and outer doors of the stone entrance chamber had been fitted with a single-leaf door, with a multiplicity of locking mechanisms and bolts.’
A = transverse bar (aškutta); B = holding bar (sikkāru); C = bolt-pin (sikkutu); D = key (namzāqu); E = wall. Drawing by A. Fuchs (reproduced from Fuchs 1998: 102)

The archaeological evidence for locking mechanisms fits well with the contemporary description of a lock of the Neo-Assyrian period: in 714, Sargon II (721–705 BCE) had the lock of the Ḥaldi temple at Mušarir removed and taken to Assyria as booty. In his inscriptions the four components of the lock are described individually and in great detail, as they are made out of gold and fashioned as works of art. Andreas Fuchs recently succeeded in identifying these components and reconstructing the lock (Fig. 2): The locking mechanism consists of a heavy transverse bar, the aškuttu. In order to lock the gate a smaller holding bar, the sikkāru, is pushed through the appropriate hole in the transverse bar. The holding bar is in turn kept in place with the help of one or several bolt-pins, the sikkatū or, in plural, sikkāte. In order to open the lock, the bolt-pins have to be removed from the holding bar with the help of a key called namzāqu.9 The mechanism of this lock closely resembles that of the ‘Egyptian lock’, also known as the Greco-Roman balanos lock.10

In accordance with the naming of this lock type, which takes its name from the bolt-pin, Greek βάλανος ‘acorn’,11 Fuchs called the Assyrian lock type sikkattu lock, after the same component.

In addition to the protection offered by heavy doors and locks, the Assyrians relied on supernatural help in order to secure their entrances. In palaces and temples, all major entrances were furnished with images of protective deities, and in these buildings as well as in private houses, clay and metal statuettes of protective spirits, sometimes supplied with short inscriptions, were buried underneath the thresholds. Together with the execution of the appropriate rituals, these representations were thought to offer potent protection against both demonic and human intruders.12 Various examples of such apotropaic figures are illustrated and discussed in one of Jeremy Black’s most popular books, Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia: an Illustrated Dictionary, co-authored with Anthony Green and illustrated by Tessa Rickards (Black and Green 1992). I offer the present paper to the memory of Jeremy whose far-ranging interests also encompassed the Neo-Assyrian period, as best illustrated by his publication of the Literary Texts from the Temple of Nabû, the fourth volume in the series Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud.

My paper will focus on the people who were entrusted with the control and supervision of the gateways and doors of the palaces. This task was shared by a number of officials: the attu ‘gatekeeper’, possibly assisted at times by the ša maṣṣartu ‘watchman’, the ša pān nērebi ‘entrance overseer’ and the rab sikkāte ‘lock master’. It will come as no surprise that some of these officials, specifically the gatekeepers and the lock masters, are also found in the context of temples. Just like palaces, temples were screened from the outside world and the methods employed—general architecture, doors, divine and human guards—are comparable.

It should be stressed that our evidence for these officials originates almost exclusively from the legal documents of the 7th century BCE from Nineveh, Assur and Kalhu.13 This brings us to the

9 Discussed by Fuchs 1998: 97–107 who also reconstructs another version of a lock with a crank (uppu) instead of the smaller holding bar (sikkāru) to keep the transverse bar (aškuttu) in place; note that such an uppu is attested also in the 7th century letter SAA 13 62: 14 in which the up-pu ša si-[kā-ti] of certain temples seems to be missing. Fuchs was neither aware of the archaeological remains of locks from the Neo-Assyrian period nor of the work of Potts 1990 who, like himself, proposed the Egyptian lock (= balanos lock) as a model for the Mesopotamian lock. Potts’ identification of the various Akkadian terms with the parts of this lock type differs in some regards from Fuchs as he did not concentrate on one period’s evidence but used terminology from different ages; nevertheless, Potts’ and Fuchs’ overall results match very well. Note also the additional Old Babylonian evidence in an administrative text from Sippar, listing various parts of locks (BM 80394, for the edition see van Koppen 2001: 217–22 no. 3).

10 Cf. also Potts 1990: 188–9.

11 The most exhaustive information on the balanos lock, its use and the various possibilities for manipulating it is found in the account of Aeneas Tacticus, Περὶ τοῦ πῶς χρῆ πολιορκοῦμενος ἀντέχειν, xviii–xx, written shortly after 360 BCE (edition: Loeb Classical Library no. 156).

12 For the rituals see Wiggermann 1992; for the representations of the protective deities see Rittig 1977 and Kolbe 1981.

13 A note concerning absolute dates after the year 648 BCE: as the sequence of the officials holding the office of year eponym after this date has not been handed down to us, it has to be reconstructed. Recently two
methodological aspects of this paper. The witness lists of the Neo-Assyrian legal documents, especially the long ones found in the sale texts, are to be counted among our best sources for the reconstruction of Neo-Assyrian society. A person’s place in the sequence of a witness list allows us to deduce that person’s status relative to the other witnesses. The general rule is: the earlier the person is mentioned in the list, the more important he is. That the sequence of the witnesses is by no means arbitrary is clear from the fact that the same sequence can be found in different texts which were written at different times. This leads to a second principle: witnesses of a certain profession are often attested together with colleagues or members of closely related professions. This fact is extremely useful when it comes to the interpretation of hitherto unidentified professions.

THE GATEKEEPER: \textit{ATU'}\textit{U}

The title of gatekeeper is one of the most frequently attested professional titles in the Neo-Assyrian texts, and is always written with the logogram \textit{(lō)a1,DU}. Its realization in Neo-Assyrian is probably \textit{atu’u}.\textsuperscript{14} Nothings speaks against the basic assumption that, as in the preceding periods,\textsuperscript{15} the task of the gatekeeper is indeed the guarding and surveillance of gateways and doors. To while away the time, the gatekeepers often seem to have taken to gambling.\textsuperscript{16}

Gatekeepers are found both in palaces and temples.\textsuperscript{17} Two titles for gatekeepers of superior rank are attested. While according to the known sources the office of a ‘great gatekeeper’ (\textit{atu’u rabi\textit{u}}) existed exclusively at the Aššur temple, the ‘chief gatekeeper’ (\textit{rab atu’ê}) is for the time being only attested at the royal palace at Nineveh.\textsuperscript{18} Best known is the chief gatekeeper Ḫa-baṣši who held this office during the reigns of Esarhaddon (680–669) and Assurbanipal (668–c. 630 BCE). That the office of chief gatekeeper could be held by more than one person at a time is clear from the fact that Ḫa-baṣši is mentioned together with his colleague, the chief gatekeeper Tariba-Issar, in two texts from early in the reign of Assurbanipal.\textsuperscript{19} In two other texts from the same period he is attested together with another chief gatekeeper, Nabû-šumu-ṣuṣur.\textsuperscript{20} However, Ḫa-baṣši is by far the best known holder of this office. He is attested from 679 until 663.\textsuperscript{21} His promotion seems to coincide with Esarhaddon’s accession to the throne.\textsuperscript{22}

reconstructions differing from each other in detail have been published: S. Parpola \textit{apud} Radner 1998: xviii–xx (henceforth Parpola 1998) and Reade 1998: 256–7. Both dating proposals are given in the following.

\textsuperscript{14} For a discussion of the Neo-Assyrian reading of the logogram \textit{(lō)a1,DU} (including a rebuttal of J.V. Kinnier Wilson’s suggestion to read it as \textit{pētīu}) see Menzel 1981: I 230 with n. 3059.

\textsuperscript{15} Good evidence for the activities of gatekeepers is found in literary texts, especially in \textit{Ištar’s Descent to the Netherworld} and in \textit{Nergal and Ereshkigal} (for references see CAD A/2 516–7: \textit{atu} A a) and in the Middle Babylonian text BE 14 129 (see CAD A/2 517: \textit{atu} A b.4’), but the most detailed information stems not from Mesopotamia, but from Anatolia: a Middle Hittite text from Boğazköy (IBO\textit{T} 1 36) is a catalogue of regulations concerning security measures at the royal court, and its first section concerns the proper locking and unlocking of the palace gates (for an edition see Güterbök and van den Hout 1991: 4–5).

\textsuperscript{16} Note the carving of game-boards on the plinths of colossal figures standing in gateways of the royal palace of Dur-Šarrukin now in London (British Museum, ME 118808–9) and Paris (Musée du Louvre, AO 19863), see Reade 2000: 611.

\textsuperscript{17} For the temple gatekeepers see Menzel 1981: I 230.

\textsuperscript{18} For this title see Menzel 1981: I 230.

\textsuperscript{19} SAA 14 65 r. 7’ (dated 668) and SAA 14 66 r. 4’ (date lost).

\textsuperscript{20} Nabû-šumu-ṣuṣur is attested in SAA 6 307 r. 5 (dated 668) and SAA 6 308 r. 8 (date lost).

\textsuperscript{21} For a complete list of attestations see my contribution in Baker 2000: 435–6 s.v. Ḫa-baṣši 2.

\textsuperscript{22} According to the list of attestations given by Lipiński 1983: 128–30, Ḫa-baṣši (‘Ahoubasti’) would be attested twice as a simple gatekeeper during Sennacherib’s reign. But one attestation, ADD 443 = SAA 6 348 r. 14’ (dated 686), refers to one \textit{[ba]x x Ḫa-baṣši} and the other—the title is restored—indeed refers to Ḫa-baṣši, but is to be dated to the reign of Assurbanipal due to its context in the Remanni-Adad archive; Lipiński’s dating to 696 is due to the erroneous join of 83-1-18, 259+397 with 83-1-28, 372, as copied in ADD 297; today, the fragments are again separated from one another. The latter fragment, which bears the date, was published on its own as ADD 614 (most recent edition: SAA 6 128; note that this corresponds to ARU 93, not ARU 72), the two others were most recently edited as SAA 6 348. Hence, there are no attestations for Ḫa-baṣši prior to the reign of Esarhaddon.
Arbailaiu23 and Nabu’a,24 the two chief gatekeepers known during the reign of Sennacherib (704–681 BCE), are not attested at all during Esarhaddon’s reign. They may have been among those officials who lost their office and probably their life after the murder of Sennacherib and the subsequent war that led to Esarhaddon’s accession. The last chief gatekeeper known to us by name is Ququ; it is not known under which king he served.25

It is likely that the dimensions of the royal palace at Nineveh made it necessary to organize the many gatekeepers hierarchically, with the appointment of several chief gatekeepers who were probably responsible for different parts of the palace. It is rather plausible that this office also existed in the earlier main residences of the Assyrian kings, at least at the enormous palace of Dur-Sarrukin.

THE WATCHMAN: ŠA MAŠŠARTI
The title ša maššarti26 means ‘watchman’, literally ‘He of the guard’, and is used to designate a person who guards a concrete object, in contrast to the title maššuru, which specifies an official of more far-reaching competence.27

Only once is a watchman, one Inurta-šarru-usur from Assur, attested as a witness in a legal text, together with a gatekeeper and a lock master.28 Another watchman from Assur, a certain Mannu-
[...] , is mentioned in a judicial document in the context of supervising a river ordeal.29 The names of eighteen watchmen who are to protect twenty-two magnates and governors are known from an administrative text from Kalhu, dating to the reign of Sargon II.30

Most other attestations of watchmen are found in the royal correspondence from Nineveh, as a rule without any mention of their names. In one such letter, the astrologer Balasi asks Esarhaddon to supply him with a watchman to protect him against the servants of the chief cupbearer who are causing damage to his estates.31 His access to the precious items which he is protecting could make the watchman the suspect in the case of damage. Hence an anonymous watchman was accused of theft by some augurs for whose protection he was responsible, according to a letter of Upaq-Šamaš to Sargon II. Although Upaq-Šamaš’s examination of the case showed that the watchman was innocent, he was replaced by a colleague, obviously because further collaboration with the augurs was impossible after these accusations.32 But usually watchmen seem to have been considered supremely trustworthy; thus the exorcist Nabu-nadin-er, the governor of Assur, asks Sargon II to send him either a ša qurbūti, an honorary title designating officials who enjoyed the king’s trust,33 or else a watchman to supervise the workmen performing construction work in the palace of Ekallate.34 That the watchmen’s rank in the court hierarchy was inferior to that of a ša qurbūti is also clear from the evidence of divinatory queries to the sun god asking whether the members of court and

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23 SAA 6 130 r. 8 (dated 696).
24 SAA 6 163 r. 11’ (dated 686).
25 SAA 14 126 r. 10 (date lost).
26 CAD M/I 341: ‘guard, watchman’; AHw 620: maššurtum(m) 1.c. (no translation given).
27 For the maššar bet ili see Menzel 1981: I 245–6.
30 CTN 3 86: 20: šà–en, nun.
32 SAA 5 163: 5, r. 9: 14šà–en, nun.
34 For a discussion of this title see Radner 2002: 13–14.
35 SAA 1 99 r. 17: 14šà–en, nun.
army would initiate a rebellion against Assurbanipal. The ša qurbūti officials are mentioned much earlier than the watchmen, who are listed after the mace bearers (ša huṭāri) and before the dispatch riders (kallāpu).36

From the Neo-Assyrian attestations it is clear that a watchman is a member of the palace staff. His task is to protect specific persons or things, but it would appear that he was assigned to them only temporarily and not on a permanent basis. Although our sources offer no evidence for the fact that a watchman would guard an entrance, it may well have happened occasionally in order to reinforce the number of gatekeepers.

THE ENTRANCE OVERSEER: ŠA PĀN NĒREBI

That the official called ša pān nērebi37 is concerned with entrances is already clear from his title, which literally means ‘the one in front of the entrance’. The title is attested six times in five Neo-Assyrian texts. It is mentioned in three legal documents from Kālḫu, in a letter from the royal correspondence and in an administrative text from Nineveh.

Officials bearing this title seem to be active exclusively in palaces and are presently not attested in the context of temples. A connection with the control and surveillance of palace entrances is suggested not only by the title itself, but also because of the mention of a ša pān nērebi together with gatekeepers and a lock master in the witness lists of two legal texts from Kālḫu.38 By analogy with other professional titles of the type ša pān X, such as ša pān ekkāli ‘palace supervisor’ or ša pān denānī ‘lawsuit supervisor’, we may assume that the ša pān nērebi did not physically stand guard in front of an entrance but held an administrative function controlling admittance to the palace. As entrance overseers are attested for the palaces at Kalḫu and Nineveh, we may suppose that these officials existed in every palace. It would seem likely that the entrance overseer was responsible for the organization of the guard of the various entrances of the palace and that he was therefore the direct superior of the gatekeepers, coordinating their service. The fact that Šalmu-ahliyutu, the entrance overseer of the Review Palace of Kalḫu, precedes the gatekeeper Šepe-Inurta-asbat in the witness list would support this.

The known office-holders

• Mannu-ki-Inurta, entrance overseer in Kālḫu during the later reign of Assurbanipal (668–c. 630 BCE)

[1] ND 3426 I.e. 3 = Wiseman 1953: pl. xii (copy) = Postgate 1976: no. 9 (dated 9.xii.649): Mannu-ki-Inurta ša-šagā-nē-re-bi is the last witness in a slave purchase document from the archive of the eunuch Šamaš-šarru-usur. Most witnesses have a title: the gatekeepers Nur-Šamaš (r. 14) and Tutaia (I.e. 2), the lock master of the crown prince, Tur-dala (r. 16), the eunuchs Šīl-Bel-dalli (r. 8) and Dagi₃-nil (r. 10), the scribes Samidu (r. 9) and Issar-šumu-iddina (r. 19), Nabu-le’re, a servant of the queen (r. 15), Dudu, temple administrator (lāštinnu) of the Ninurta temple (r. 12), Urdu, cook of the Nabu temple (r. 13), Inurtanu, baker of the Ninurta temple (r. 18), as well as four fowlers and gooseherds. The appearance of these last witnesses can be explained due to Šamaš-šarru-usur’s business interests in bird breeding.39

• Šalmu-ahliyutu, entrance overseer (of the Review Palace) in Kālḫu during the reign of Sin-šarru-iṣkun (c. 626–612 BCE)

[2] CTN 3 30: 14 (dated 4.iii.617 [after Parpola 1998] or 625 [after Reade 1998]; eponymy of Aššur-remanni): Šalmu-ahliyutu ša-šagā-nē-re-bi acts as a witness in a lawcase between the šakintu (the female equivalent of the palace manager for the queen’s household) of the Review Palace (‘Fort Shalmaneser’) and a man called Kabaliu; he is mentioned before the gatekeeper Šepe-Inurta-asbat (l. 15) and after the courtier (ša-DUMU-É.GAL) Tartimanni (l. 13), known from CTN 3 39: envelope l. 11 as the palace manager

36 SAA 4 142: 8: ša-ša[N]|UN.MEŠ; SAA 4 144: 8: ša–EN.NUN.MEŠ. Together with dispatch riders, guards are mentioned also in a fragmentarily preserved letter to the king, SAA 16 6 r. 3: ša–EN.NUN.
37 CAD N 2/1 177: nērebi in ša pān nēribi: ‘an official in charge of the entrance’. AHw 780: nērebu(m) 1 (no translation given).
38 ša pān nērebi together with gatekeepers in CTN 3 30 and ND 3426; ša pān nērebi together with lock
master in ND 3426.
of the Review Palace. It can therefore be assumed with some certainty that Šalmu-ahḫutu was the entrance overseer of the Review Palace.

- \[\ldots\]ani, entrance overseer in Kalhu

[3] Copenhagen no. 7 r. 6’ = Fales 1987: 22 no. 7 (date lost): \[^{[*]}\text{[x x]-a-ni **ša-agi–né-re-[e-bi]**} and another entrance overseer, \[^{[*]}\text{[x x]}\) (see [4]), act as witnesses in a badly preserved document from Kalhu; other witnesses bearing professional titles are the scribe Balassu (r. 4’) and a commander-of-fifty (r. 2’).

- \[^{[*]}\text{[x x]}\), entrance overseer in Kalhu

[4] Copenhagen no. 7 r. 3’ = Fales 1987: 22 no. 7 (date lost): \[^{[*]}\text{[x x]-e **ša-[i]–né-re-bi**} acts as a witness in the same text as the entrance overseer \[^{[*]}\text{[x x]}\) (see [3]).

- Two anonymous entrance overseers in Nineveh in the 7th century

[5] ABL 875 = SAA 16 91: 7’ (reign of Esarhaddon): A **ša–i–ša–i–né-re-bi** whose name is lost is mentioned in a letter by a unknown author to the king, together with a number of members of the palace staff. The next official mentioned is Man[...], the overseer of the palace’s storage facilities (*bēt qāṭē*).

[6] IM 59049 = MacGinnis 1992: 4-5 no. 3 = SAA 11 24 r. 3 (not dated): An anonymous **ša–ša–i–né-re-bi** is mentioned in an administrative text from Nineveh listing amounts of barley and straw together with the officials in charge; the entrance overseer is one of them.

**THE LOCK MASTER: RAB SIKKĀTE**

The title of rab sikkāte has never before been interpreted in the context of the guarding and control of entrances. In the following, I hope to make the identification as a lock master plausible.

The dictionaries fail to offer a satisfactory translation for the title rab sikkāte, which, to my present knowledge, is attested twelve times in the Neo-Assyrian period. AHw discusses the title under sikkatu(m) ‘Nagel\(^{43}\) whereas CAD\(^{45}\) files it under its synonym, a lemma primarily attested in Old Assyrian documents,\(^{46}\) but also found in Old Babylonian texts.\(^{47}\) The Old Assyrian plural term sikkātum refers to a religious festival,\(^{48}\) and the official rabi sikkātim/rabi sikkātim—who was for a long time thought to be ‘a high military official’\(^{49}\)—is therefore likely to have been responsible for its organization.\(^{50}\)

For the Neo-Assyrian title, however, this translation is unsatisfactory; hence, we will investigate its meaning independently of the older evidence. The spellings with the logogram \(^{[\text{GAG,MEŠ}}\) alone make it perfectly clear that the Neo-Assyrian title is based on the plural form of the term sikkatu (NA sikkatu) ‘nail, peg’.\(^{51}\) As the same person’s title is written once in syllabic and once in logographic writing in two texts from the same archive,\(^{52}\) there can be no doubt that the Neo-Assyrian realization of the logogram \(^{[\text{GAG,MEŠ}}}\) is indeed rab sikkāte. The title’s verbatim translation is therefore ‘peg master’;\(^{53}\) Rather than assuming that the pegs in question

\(^{40}\) See Dalley and Postgate 1984: 6–7 for this official.

\(^{41}\) AHw 1041–2.

\(^{42}\) CAD S 252–4: sikkatu B in rabi sikkati (rab sikkat).

\(^{43}\) AHw 1041–2: sikkatu(m) A discusses in one entry those attestations which are filed under sikkatu A and B in CAD.

\(^{44}\) The most important attestations are found in *Enûma Eliš* i 151, ii 37, iii 41, 99 (Tiamat appoints Kingu to the office of rab sikkātūtim). Cf. also footnote 56.

\(^{45}\) For recent discussions of its meaning see Kryszat 2004: 19–25.

\(^{46}\) See CAD S 252.

\(^{47}\) For a discussion of the title (with earlier literature) see Kryszat 2004: 25–8.

\(^{48}\) CAD S 247–51: sikkatu A.

\(^{49}\) CTN 3 36: 15 and CTN 3 39: envelope l. 12. The following writings are attested: \(^{[\text{GAL–ši-ka-a-te}}\) (ND 2307 l.h.e. 2), \(^{[\text{GAL–ši-ka-te}}\) (ND 2308 r. 1), \(^{[\text{GAL–ši-ka-ši}}\) (text: KUR) (CTN 3 39: envelope l. 12), \(^{[\text{GAL–ši-ka-a-ši-ka-ši}}\) (SAA 14 62 r. 11, CTN 3 36: 15, ND 3420 r. 16), \(^{[\text{GAL–ši-ka-ši-ka-a-ši}}\) (ND 2316 r. 6, ND 3425 r. 17), \(^{[\text{GAL–ši-ka-ši-ka-a-ši-ka-ši}}\) (SAA 6 95 r. 6, ND 2315 r. 11), \(^{[\text{GAL–ši-ka-ši-ka-a-ši-ka-ši}}\) (A 338 r. 7).

always had to be wooden, the frequent spelling with the wood determinative غ had should be understood as a writing convention.

As already mentioned, Andreas Fuchs has recently stressed the central function of a building part named sikkatu (NA sikkatu) ‘peg’ in the construction of a type of lock which is well attested for the Neo-Assyrian period. Because of the importance of this component and by analogy with the naming of the Greek balanos lock, Fuchs called this type of lock the sikkatu lock. It would seem possible that the title rab sikkate has to be understood in this context, especially considering that the term sikkatu is used in the names of three professions concerned with entrances which, however, are attested only in lexical texts: mušelu sikkati ‘the one who lifts the bolt-pin’, nādī u sikkati ‘the one who drops the bolt-pin’ and pētu sikkati ‘the one who opens the bolt-pin’.52

An examination of the context of the Neo-Assyrian attestations shows that the title rab sikkate can indeed be interpreted as an official dealing with entrances, as the official is always mentioned in a palace or temple context, usually among high-ranking personnel and very often together with gatekeepers and other officials controlling entrances. In the available sources (for attestations see below), the rab sikkate is once mentioned with two gatekeepers and an entrance overseer, in another text together with a gatekeeper and a watchman, once with at least two gatekeepers, and another time with one gatekeeper. I therefore propose the translation ‘lock master’, assuming that the crucial component sikkatu denotes—pars pro toto—the lock in its entirety. This is all the more likely as the sikkatu is the central element of the more primitive locking mechanism which is attested all over the Near East from the Uruk period.53 This older system consisted of a peg, the sikkatu, which was used to block a door and which was then secured against tampering with the help of a sealing. Suzanne Herbordt, when studying the 565 Neo-Assyrian clay sealings from Nineveh, was unable to identify a single example for such a door sealing in the Neo-Assyrian period.54 This would seem to indicate that the system was no longer in use at that time, and I suggest that this was so because it had been replaced with the sikkatu lock.

At present, there are eleven known lock masters, attested so far at Assur and Kalhu and only after the year 663 BCE (see below for attestations). For Kalhu alone, four lock masters are attested during the reign of Assurbanipal, over a time span of approximately 25 years, while four other lock masters from Kalhu are contemporaries serving during the reign of Sinšarru-šikun. These groupings result from the fact that there were different lock masters for and active in different (parts of) palaces and temples. Each of these institutions seems to have one lock master at its service, with separate officials for the queen’s and crown prince’s quarters in the palace. The lock masters working in palaces seem to be the direct subordinates of the palace manager or, in the case of the queen’s household, of the šakintu. Sometimes the title of the lock master gives us details of his sphere of activity. From their titles we known that Indi is the lock master of the temple of Nabu in Assur, that Nabu-belu-ushur is the lock master of the queen’s household in Kalhu and that Turdala is the lock master of the household of the crown prince in that city. In other cases we can extrapolate the lock master’s sphere of activity from the context. Hence Inurta-aḫu-iddina is probably the Kalhu Review Palace’s lock master, due to his connection with Tartimanni, the palace manager of the Review Palace. Aššur-mudammiq seems to be the lock master of the New Palace in Kalhu, as he acts as a witness for this palace’s šakintu, the female equivalent of a palace manager in the queen’s household. As Aššur-mudammiq is of superior status to Nabu-belu-usur, the latter’s sphere of activity, known from his title as the lock master of the queen’s household, can be further specified as that of the lock master of the queen’s household at the New Palace of Kalhu. He is therefore the successor of Šulmu-beli who held this same office some twenty years earlier, as can be assumed from the context in which he occurs. Due to their connection with palace managers,

51 See footnote 9.
52 In the Lû list, see Salonen 1961: 131–2 s. v. and CAD S 249: sikkatu A 2.
53 For bibliographical references see Herbordt 1992: 55 with n. 122 and 69 with n. 168.
54 Herbordt 1992: 69–70.
courtiers or palace slaves, the lock masters Kablu’-Issar, Nabu’a, Šulmu-šarri of Kalḫu and [...]-ukin are also certain to have worked in palaces. Šulmu-šarri of Assur, on the other hand, may well have been the lock master of a temple in Assur, if not the Aššur temple itself, as he is attested with numerous high administrative temple officials.

There is no indication that lock masters were in any way connected with city gates. As the title of a rab abullātē ‘overseer of the city gates’ is attested in a letter from the royal correspondence,\textsuperscript{55} we may assume that the organization of the guard of the city gates was this official’s responsibility.

Unfortunately, the attestations known so far tell us nothing about the exact function of the lock master. Theoretically, several possible activities arise from dealings with locks and their components. One possibility is that the lock master is the craftsman who builds the locks; this seems unlikely for two reasons. Firstly, there is no connection whatsoever with related craftsmen such as smiths. Secondly, the lock master seems to enjoy considerably higher status than would be expected for such a craftsman. For the same reasons it is not plausible that he is the craftsman responsible for the maintenance of the lock, especially since such a simple mechanism as that of the sikkatu lock does not necessitate much maintenance work. As it is certain from the known attestations that the lock master holds a high-ranking administrative post, it is most plausible to assume that he was responsible for the safekeeping of the bolt-pins necessary for locking, and for the keys necessary for unlocking the locks, as well as for the actual locking and unlocking.

To conclude, it should be noted that the same interpretation very likely applies for the Old Babylonian usage,\textsuperscript{56} and certainly for the Neo-Babylonian attestations of the rab sikkātē.\textsuperscript{57} This official is clearly a high-ranking member of the temple staff and is so far attested for the Ebabbar in Sippar and the Eanna in Uruk. In the Ebabbar, one man, Šamaš-aḫa-iddina, held the post over the long period of 28 years.\textsuperscript{58}

The known office-holders

- Aššur-mudammiq, lock master in Kalḫu during the reign of Sin-šarru-šākun
  \[1\] ND 2307 l.e. 2 = Parker 1954: pl. vi (copy) = Postgate 1976: no. 14 (dated 8.xii.622 [after Parpola 1998 = Reade 1998]; eponymy of Daddi): ‘aššur-mu-dam-qi GAL–si-ka-a-te is the fifth witness in the marriage document between Šubetu, daughter of Amat-Astarti, šakintu of the New Palace of Kalḫu, and Milki-ramu, son of Abdi-Azuzi; other witnesses bearing professional titles are the mayor Arabaiu (r. 27), the priests Nabu-šumu-šuṣur (r. 28, also mentioned in text [6] with the lock master Nabu’a) and Iddin-Aia (r. 29), the courtier (\textsuperscript{6}KUR) Indabe (l.e. 1) and Nabu-belu-šuṣur, the lock master of the household of the queen (l.e. 3, cf. [7]). As Aššur-mudammiq precedes Nabu-belu-šuṣur in the witness list, we may suppose that he was considered to be of superior rank and it is therefore likely that he was the lock master of the New Palace.

- Indi, lock master of the Nabu temple in Assur during the latter years of the reign of Assurbanipal
  \[2\] A 338 r. 7’ = Stat 1 20 = Stat 2 238 (dated 6.xii.633 [after Parpola 1998] or 638 [after Reade 1998]; eponymy of Upaqara-ana-Arbaiu): \textsuperscript{5}in-di-i GAL–GAG is one of the witnesses in a badly broken text documenting a sale by the scribe Eti-pi-Marduk son of Balassu. Other witnesses bearing professional titles are the gatekeeper Nabu-na’di (r. 4’) and the watchman Inurta-šarru-šuṣur (r. 10’).

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{55} SAA 13 128 r. 17: LÚ.GAL–KÁ.GAL.MEŠ. This official is mentioned in a letter by Aššur-reṣuwa, priest of the Ninurta temple of Kalḫu, to the king. From the context of the letter it is clear that the overseer of the city gates held a rank inferior to that of the priest himself and the mayor (\textsuperscript{6}KUR) of Kalḫu.
  \item \textsuperscript{56} See now also Stol 2004: 666–7.
  \item \textsuperscript{57} For attestations from the Ebabbar in Sippar see Bongenaar 1997: 134, for attestations from the Eanna in Uruk see Gehlken 1990: 93–4. The interpretation as ‘Pflugscharmeister’ as suggested in AHW 1042 and adopted by Gehlken seems unlikely to me, especially as Bongenaar stressed that ‘no connection with the ploughmen of Ebabbar can be detected’.
  \item \textsuperscript{58} Nabonidus 15 to Darius 12; for attestations see Bongenaar 1997: 134.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
• Inurta-aḫu-iddina, lock master (of the Review Palace) in Kālḫu during the reign of Sin-šarru-išku

[3] CTN 3 36: 15 (dated 28.xi.622 [after Parpola 1998 = Reade 1998]; eponymy of Daddi): \( \text{i}^\text{MAS-PAB-AS}_{\text{GAL-MES}}^\text{GAL} \) is the first witness in a text documenting the delivery of the daughter of [...]-Nanaia to the šakīntu of the household of the queen. The only other witness with a professional title is the fuller Iqbi-Adad (l. 16).

[4] CTN 3 39: envelope l. 12 (dated 19.i.615 [after Parpola 1998] or 617 [after Reade 1998]; eponymy of Sin-ali-k-pañi): \( \text{i}^\text{MAS-PAB-AS}_{\text{GAL-SI-KAL}} \) (copy: KUR) is the second witness mentioned on the envelope of an obligation note documenting a debt owed by Šalu-su-rī-qīqī to lady Attar-pal, scribe of the queen. Inurta-aḫu-iddina, who is mentioned without title in the inner tablet (l. 14), is listed with the title on the envelope after the palace manager Tartimanni (l. 11). Although the lock master’s title is not further specified we may safely assume that he is the lock master of the Review Palace, just like Tartimanni is the palace manager of the Review Palace. Because of Inurta-aḫu-iddina’s involvement with the šakīntu of the household of the queen and the queen’s scribe, a connection specifically with the queen’s household at the Review Palace may be possible. The position of the lock master of the household of the queen in the New Palace at Kālḫu is at that time held by Nabu-belu-ušur.

• Kablu'-Issar, lock master, probably at Assur during the reign of Assurbanipal or his successors

[5] ADD 62 = SAA 6 95 r. 6 (no date mentioned; reign of Assurbanipal or later): \( \text{kab-he-15}_{\text{GAL-MES}}^\text{GAL} \) is the first witness in a document concerning a field of the šakīntu. Other witnesses bearing professional titles are Sana-il, messenger of the palace manager (r. 7), and the scribe Nabu-remanni (r. 8). Although the lock master’s title is not further specified we may safely assume that he is the lock master of the Review Palace, just like Tartimanni is the palace manager of the Review Palace. Because of Inurta-aḫu-iddina’s involvement with the šakīntu of the household of the queen and the queen’s scribe, a connection specifically with the queen’s household at the Review Palace may be possible. The position of the lock master of the household of the queen in the New Palace at Kālḫu is at that time held by Nabu-belu-ušur.

• Nabu’a, lock master in Kālḫu during the reign of Sin-šarru-išku

[6] ND 2308 r. 1 = Parker 1954: pl. vii (copy) = Postgate 1976 no. 11 (dated 25.viii.616 [after Parpola 1998] or 621 [after Reade 1998]; eponymy of Bel-ḫu-usur): \( \text{id}_{\text{PAB-AS}}^\text{PAB-GAL-SI-KE} \) is the third witness in a text documenting the release of a female palace slave by one Manmu-ki-abī; other witnesses bearing professional titles are the mayor Arabaiu (r. 27), and the scribe Nabu-rāmanni (r. 8). Although the text is said to originate from Nineveh it probably comes from Assur originally, as the penalty clauses are in favour of Aššur and Mullissu—a typical feature of Assur legal texts. The document itself does not mention a date, which is rather unusual and should probably be explained as a mistake. But while the text was filed among the texts from the reigns of the kings Tiglath-pileser III (744–727 BCE) through to Esarhaddon in the latest edition, it should rather be dated to the reign of Assurbanipal or one of his successors, as indicated by the use of a penalty clause which is only attested from 650 BCE onwards.59

• Nabu-belu-ušur, lock master of the household of the queen in Kālḫu during the reign of Sin-šarru-išku

[7] ND 2307 l.h.e. 3 = Parker 1954: pl. vi (copy) = Postgate 1976 no. 14 (dated 8.xii.622 [after Parpola 1998 = Reade 1998]; eponymy of Daddi): \( \text{id}_{\text{PAB-GAL-MES}}^\text{PAB-GAL : ŠA E ME KUR KUR} \) is the sixth witness in the marriage document between Šubetu, daughter of Amat-Asbart, šakīntu of the New Palace of Kālḫu, and Milki-ramu, son of Abdi-Azūzī; other witnesses bearing professional titles are the mayor Arabaiu (r. 27), the priests Nabu-šumu-ušur (r. 28, also mentioned in [6] with the lock master Nabu’a and Iddin-Aia (r. 29), the courtier (\( \text{id}_{\text{KUR}}^\text{KUR} \)) Indabe (l. Rd. 1) and the lock master Aššur-mudammiq and Nabu-belu-ušur).

• Šulmu-beli, lock master during the reign of Assurbanipal

[8] ND 2316 r. 6 = Parker 1954: pl. vii (copy) (dated 24.i.641 [after Parpola 1998] or 640 [after Reade 1998]; eponymy of Aššur-guru’a-nere): \( \text{id}_{\text{GAL-MES}}^\text{GAL} \) is the second witness in the marriage document between Milki-ḫaia, a female palace slave of the New Palace of Kālḫu dedicated to the goddess Mullissu, and the weaver Mutaqin-Issar. Šulmu-beli is mentioned after the only other witness with a professional title, the weaver Qbizit-Issar (r. 5). He may well be the predecessor of Nabu-belu-usur as the lock master of the queen’s household in the New Palace of Kālḫu.

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59 See Radner 2002: 19 for the evidence on the clause adē ša ṣarrit ina qātēšu uba’i'ā. 
• Šulmu-šarrī (A), lock master in Kālhu during the reign of Assurbanipal
eponymy of Zābabā-eriba): ʿdi-mu–MAN ʾuGAL–GAG.MEŠ is the last witness in the text documenting the sale
of a slave woman to Ubru-Nabû, the palace manager of the Review Palace (‘Fort Shalmaneser’),60 by the
gatekeepers Ṣepē-Nabû-aṣbat and Ubru-Sebetti, the sons of Šamaš-ši’i. The only other witness with a
professional title is the scribe Remanni-İssar (r. 8) but some of the witnesses without titles are gatekeepers,
just like the sellers: ṹultai, for example, is attested with this title together with Ṭur-dala, the lock
master of the crown prince, in ND 3426 i.e. 2. Due to his connection with Ubru-Nabû, Šulmu-šarrī is
very likely to be the lock master of the Review Palace. Note that a lock master named Šulmu-šarrī is also
attested in Assur (see [10]); possibly these two men are identical.

• Šulmu-šarrī (B), lock master in Assur during the late reign of Assurbanipal (or possibly during
the reign of his successors)
[10] ADD 575+579+805 r. 11’ = SAA 14 62 (date lost): ʿdi-mu–LUGAL ʾuGAL–GAG.MEŠ is the seventh
witness in a text in which only the lengthy witness list is preserved; all witnesses bear their titles: the
eunuch and temple overseer Ṭaba (r. 5’), the palace manager Aḫu-eriba (r. 6’), the temple scribe Marduku-
šallīm-abīš (r. 7’), the eunuch and overseer of the royal tombs Nabû-šezibamī (r. 8’), the eunuchs and
overseers of the mausoleum Nabû-gamil (r. 9’), and Šulmu-šarrī (r. 10’), the (temple) brewer Mutakkîl-
Ṿāsûr (r. 12’), Ūrubu-Nanaia, priest of Šamaš (r. 13’), and the eunuchs Aššûr-isse’a (r. 14’) and Kunaiya (r.
15’). For prosopographical reasons, the text must have originated in Assur61 and it can be safely
attributed to the late reign of Assurbanipal (or later). Note that the lock master Šulmu-šarrī who is attested
in Kālhu (see [9]) could possibly be the same man.

• Ṭur-dala, lock master of the (household of the) crown prince in Kālhu during the reign of
Assurbanipal
ʾuGAL–GAG.MEŠ ša A–MAN is the ninth witness in a slave sale document from the archive of the eunuch
Šamaš-šarru-usur. Most witnesses have a title: the gatekeepers Nur-Šamaš (r. 14) and ṹultai (i.e. 2), the
entrance overseer Mannu-ki-Inurta (i.h.e. 3), the eunuchs Šîl-Bel-dallî (r. 8) and Dagîl-ilî (r. 10), the
scribes Šamidu (r. 9) and Issar-šumu-iddina (r. 19), Nabû-le’i, servant of the queen (r. 15’), Dūdu, temple
administrator (laḫḫinnu) of the Ninurta temple (r. 12), Ūrubu, cook of the Nabû temple (r. 13), Inurṭu,
baker of the Ninurta temple (r. 18), as well as four fowlers and gooseherds. The appearance of these last
witnesses can be explained by Šamaš-šarru-usur’s business interests in bird breeding.

• […]-ūkin (or […]-ka’inn), lock master in Kālhu during the early years of Assurbanipal’s reign
badly broken text documenting the sale of a slave woman by Amurṭeši to the lady Ṣatta-ḫaši. Other
witnesses with professional titles are a gatekeeper (r. 8) and a courtier (r. 12: dūmu–e.GAL) whose names
are lost. We can certainly suppose that […]-ūkin was lock master of one of the palace households of
Kālhu.

THE DATE OF INTRODUCTION OF THE OFFICES OF LOCK MASTER AND
ENTRANCE OVERSEER
The offices of lock master and entrance overseer are not attested at all prior to the reign of
Assurbanipal. In addition, it seems that some of the lock master’s sphere of activity was taken over
from the palace manager (who is clearly responsible for locks and locking in the Middle Assyrian
period)62 and, in the case of the temples, from the laḫḫinnu65 official.63

Although it remains possible that these offices already existed already before Assurbanipal’s
reign and that they are unattested through lack of evidence, it is in my opinion more plausible that
these offices were indeed an innovation at the beginning of the reign of Assurbanipal. They were

60 For Ubru-Nabû see Dalley and Postgate 1984: 6–7.
61 Kwsman 1988: 56.
62 According to the Middle Assyrian Court and Harem Edicts § 1; edition: Weidner 1954/6: 268.
63 For the laḫḫinnu official in connection with locks see a text listing the responsibilities of various temple
officials from Assur; VAT 13718 ii 8–13. See Ebeling 1950: 37 (copy), Ebeling 1954: 24–5 (transliteration and
translation) and Menzel 1981: II T 25 no. 22 (transliteration).
quite possibly created as a consequence of the traumatic experiences of the murder of Sennacherib by the hand of his own sons in 681 BCE, followed by Esarhaddon’s narrow escape from a conspiracy in 671/670 BCE fronted by one Sasi, to whom the oracle of the god Nusku is said to have promised the Assyrian throne.\footnote{See most recently Radner 2003.}

If the Assyrian king had been carefully screened from the outside world before Sennacherib’s murder, his successor Esarhaddon was surely forced to lead a life of extreme seclusion, in constant fear, as is best witnessed by the many divinatory queries addressed to the sun god focussing on whether various members of the court were likely to plot against the king.\footnote{SAA 4 139–148, 151–161, 163–166 and 168–171. On the presence of bodyguards of foreign origin at Esarhaddon’s court see Liverani 1995.} The murder of Sennacherib was likely to have resulted in considerable changes to the surveillance of the palace; it was mentioned above that all chief doorkeepers active during Sennacherib’s reign seem to have lost their office (and probably their life) and were replaced by new officials. While the loyalty of the gatekeepers and the watchmen is put to trial in Esarhaddon’s queries to the sun god,\footnote{Gatekeeper: SAA 4 142: 7; watchmen: SAA 4 142: 8. I am grateful to Andreas Fuchs for drawing my attention to this.} mention of the lock keeper and the entrance overseer is conspicuously absent in this context. This seems to strengthen the hypothesis that the offices of lock master and of entrance overseer were created only at the beginning of Assurbanipal’s reign, when the recent uncovering of the Sasi conspiracy had shown that events similar to Sennacherib’s murder had only just been avoided and the need for a more sophisticated security system must have seemed overwhelming.

By introducing these new offices to the palace administration the responsibility for controlling access to the palace, which previously was the domain of the gatekeepers, was now shared by several officials. This certainly reduced the power of the gatekeepers and hence diminished the risk of abuse of this power.

That the various officials responsible for the control and regulation of access to the palaces took their work seriously and that many a potential visitor would have been turned away at the palace door is clear from a proposal which the astrologer Nabu-mušeši made to the king in anticipation of his visit to the royal palace in Nineveh: ‘Maybe they won’t let me enter; let them give me an order sealed with the royal seal (\textit{unuq})!’\footnote{SAA 8 157 r. 7–8, cf. Frahm 1998: 120.} Such a document would certainly have dispelled all doubts and its holder would have been given admittance to the palace without much further ado.
**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

**ABBREVIATIONS**
Bibliographical abbreviations follow those listed in the *Chicago Assyrian Dictionary* and the *Chicago Hittite Dictionary*, with the following additions and exceptions:

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