



PERSEPOLIS ADMINISTRATIVE ARCHIVES I. PERSEPOLIS FORTIFICATION ARCHIVE

i. PERSEPOLIS FORTIFICATION ARCHIVE

Discovery, Locations, Components, Numbers. In March 1933, archaeological excavations directed by [Ernst Herzfeld](#) for the [Oriental Institute of The University of Chicago](#) discovered inscribed and sealed clay tablets and fragments at the northeastern corner of the platform of [Persepolis](#), in two small spaces of a bastion in the casemate fortification wall (Garrison and Root, 2001, pp. 23-6, Henkelman, 2008a, pp. 69-71, Stolper 2017a, pp. vi-xii). Herzfeld estimated that the find included about 30,000 or more tablets and fragments (“Recent Discoveries,” p. 232).

In 1935, Iranian authorities loaned these objects to the Oriental Institute for analysis and publication (Stolper 2017a, pp. xiv f.). About 450 tablets and tens of thousands of fragments were returned to Tehran; a small number of tablets and fragments have since been excavated at Persepolis or identified in the National Museum, and 12 others have been identified in other collections (Henkelman, 2008a, pp. 75-79). As of 2017, the balance of the Fortification archive is at the Oriental Institute, about 20,000-25,000 tablets and fragments representing about 15,000-18,000 original documents (Jones and Stolper, 2008, pp. 37-44).

There are three main kinds of Fortification tablets. Most (ca. 70 percent or more, remains of about 10,000 or more original documents) have texts in [cuneiform script](#), in [Elamite language](#). A few (ca. 5 percent, remains of about 1,000 or fewer original documents) have texts in [Aramaic](#) script and language. Many (ca. 20 percent, remains of about 5,000 or more original documents) have no texts, but only impressions of seals. The functional relationship among these components — whether they represent relatively autonomous streams of information recording comparable kinds of administrative transactions or more interdependent ways of recording the same transactions — is an unsettled issue (Garrison, 2008, pp. 183-84; Henkelman, 2008a, pp. 157-62; Garrison and Henkelman).

There are unique Fortification documents in Old Persian script and language, in Greek script and language, in the Babylonian dialect of Akkadian, and (probably) in Phrygian script and language (Stolper and Tavernier, pp. 1-5), as well as sealed clay bag or box closures, and tablets with impressions of Greek and Persian coins in place of seals.

Most of these documents were produced in the middle of the reign of [Darius I](#) by an agency that managed the intake, transfer, storage, and distribution of food crops (cereals, fruit, cress), livestock (sheep and goats, cattle, equids, poultry), food products (flour, cereal products, beer, wine, processed fruit, oil, meat), and byproducts (hides, perhaps textiles) in a region centered on Persepolis, reaching roughly from the Rām Hormoz/[Behbahān](#) area to Neyrīz, providing support for livestock, workers, craftsmen, administrators, travelers, religious personnel, courtiers, and gods.

Elamite Fortification Documents. Current understanding of the Persepolis Fortification Archive rests chiefly on a sample of the Elamite documents that includes 2,284 published texts (Hallock, 1969, 1978; Grillot; Vallat, 1994; Jones and Stolper, 2006, pp. 7-9; Arfaee, 2008b), and 2,550 texts widely cited from draft editions by Richard T. Hallock (some of them published in collated editions with photographs, see Henkelman, 2003, pp. 103-15; 2008a, pp. 379, 385-415, 455-63; 2011a, pp. 134-56; 2011c, p. 28; 2017a, pp. 274-98; 2017b, pp. 288-89, 307, 309; 2017c, pp. 187-207; Henkelman, Jones and Stolper, 2006; Henkelman and Stolper, pp. 284-86), and about 1,550 texts recorded since 2006 (some of them published in collated editions, with photographs, see Azzoni and Stolper, pp. 48-82; Henkelman, 2017a, pp. 275-76, 289-90; 2017b, pp. 320-29; Stolper 2015, pp. 6-21; 2017b, pp. 748-73; forthcoming[b]). Current understanding also draws on impressions 1,148 seals accompanying published

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Elamite texts (Garrison and Root, 1998, 2001, forthcoming[a], forthcoming[b]),
and impressions of over 2,200 more seals on mostly unpublished Fortification
documents (some published with detailed drawings and photographs, e.g.,
Garrison, 2017c, with references). Draft editions of many unpublished texts
and documentation of many unpublished seals are available via “Persepolis
Fortification Archive Project” at <http://ochre.uchicago.edu/page/projects>.

The earliest known dated Elamite Fortification text was written in month I, regnal year 13 of Darius I (April, 509 BC); the latest in month XII, regnal year 28 (March/April 493 BC). The largest numbers of dated texts are from years 22 and 23. A few texts refer to administrative records and activity as early as regnal year 4 of Darius I (518/17 BC) and a fragment that mentions regnal year 35 suggests that the Archive was still consulted as late as 487/86 BC (Stolper, 2017b, pp. 752, 767-69).

The Elamite texts mention about 150 places in the region controlled from Persepolis, including villages, estates, “paradises” (here indicating walled plantations, mentioned as sites of fruit orchards, storage facilities, and ritual activity, see Henkelman, 2008a, pp. 427-52; Boucharlat, 2016), way-stations, storehouses, fortresses, treasuries, poultry farms, towns, rivers, and mountains. The territory administered included settled areas in most of what is now [Fārs](#), valley systems between Fārs and [Kuzestān](#), areas along routes to the north and northwest, routes south to the Persian Gulf coast, and a strip of eastern modern [Kuzestān](#). Travelers’ points of departure or destinations mentioned include places in the extreme east (India, Arachosia, Bactria) and west (Sardis) of the [Achaemenid](#) Empire (Koch, 1990; Vallat, 1993; Arfaee, 2008a; Henkelman, 2008b, 2017c, pp. 157-69; forthcoming[d]). Achaemenid archaeological evidence from some of the districts administered from Persepolis is considered in Askari Chaverdi et al., 2010, 2014; Boucharlat, 2003, 2005, 2013; Boucharlat and Benech; Callieri; Carter and Wright; Carter et al., 2006; Henkelman, 2012a, 2013; Potts, 2008; Potts et al., 2007; Potts and Roustaei, 2006; Sumner).

Almost half of the Elamite texts are written on tablets with flattened left edges and rounded right edges, circa 3-5 cm wide, formed around knotted strings ([PLATE I](#)). Most of these are memoranda of single transactions. About 75 percent of them record outlays of commodities as rations to official travelers, as regular or special rations to workers, as fodder for animals, as payments to officials and others, and as sacrifices to various deities; about 25 percent record receipt, deposit, exchange, and transfer of commodities and by-

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Some texts on tablets of this form are not records of completed transactions, but orders to execute extraordinary or unscheduled transactions, cast as letters from administrators at Persepolis.

The strings around which these tablets were formed may have been attached to clay sealings, and/or to uninscribed Fortification tablets. Attachment to counterpart documents in Aramaic on perishable materials, sometimes suggested, is improbable from a practical point of view.

Most of the remaining Elamite texts are on rectangular tablets, not formed around strings, many of them in tabular formats ([PLATE II](#)). Almost all of the texts on them are secondary or tertiary records, that is, compilations and/or tabulations of information from many memoranda, sometimes supplemented with oral information or written information not preserved in the Fortification Archive. They include summaries of intake and outlay of particular commodities at particular places during one or more accounting periods (one or several years), balanced accounts, and records of year-end balances.

A few texts were labels on sealings of diverse shapes ([PLATE III](#)), once attached to bags, baskets or boxes of documents, often showing traces of strings that closed the containers and attached the sealings (Henkelman, 2008a, pp. 138-40).

Memoranda of transactions were made at settlements outside Persepolis. Some were collected and audited at district centers. Most were sent periodically to Persepolis. At Persepolis, the memoranda were collated, transcribed and digested in secondary and tertiary records. The memoranda were to be discarded. The compilations were to be kept on file. Fair copies or digests of these compilations were also made in Aramaic, on perishable materials (Azzoni and Stolper, 2015, pp. 41-47).

Aramaic Fortification Documents. About 850 Fortification tablets and fragments with monolingual Aramaic texts have been identified ([PLATE IV](#); Azzoni, 2008; Dusinberre). Almost all were formed around knotted strings that originally emerged from a flattened edge, opposite a rounded or pointed edge. The texts were incised with styluses or written in ink with pens or brushes. Some tablets have two texts, one incised, the other inked after the clay had hardened. All have impressions of seals.



Like the Elamite Fortification documents, the dated Aramaic texts fall between year 13 and year 28 of Darius I, with the greatest concentration in years 23-25. The formal properties of the Aramaic texts do not conform to those of the Elamite texts, but the contents resemble those of some categories of Elamite memoranda, including transport or deposit of commodities; disbursal of seed; disbursal of provisions for travel parties moving to and from the king, Persepolis, and distant provincial centers (e.g., [Bactria](#), [Babylon](#)); disbursal of feed for equids; and disbursal of rations for workers (Azzoni, 2008, pp. 258-62; Azzoni, 2017; Azzoni and Dusinberre; Henkelman, 2008a, pp. 89-93; Garrison and Henkelman). Most of the texts are terser than comparable Elamite documents, sometimes no more than keywords or dates. Aramaic counterparts to the Elamite letter-orders and registers are absent. Aramaic documents written on leather, sometimes alluded to in the Elamite texts, are not preserved.

Other Aramaic texts are short epigraphs in ink on 250 or more Elamite cuneiform tablets and fragments, ranging from a single word to several lines, notes made as documents and information were processed (Azzoni and Stolper, 2015).

Uninscribed (Anepigraphic) Fortification Documents (Garrison, 2008, 2017b, 2017c). Almost all of the uninscribed tablets have one flattened edge, opposite a rounded or pointed edge ([PLATE V](#)). Almost all tablets are formed around knotted strings. They have impressions of up to five seals, some of them also used on Elamite and/or Aramaic documents. Patterns of seal use imply that at least some of the uninscribed tablets were produced in connection with outlays or deliveries of commodities in transactions comparable to some of those recorded in the Elamite and/or Aramaic Fortification tablets. Conspicuously absent from the seals impressed on uninscribed tablets and the Aramaic tablets are those found on Elamite registers and accounts, those belonging to the chief administrative officer Parnakka (Old Iranian *Farnaka-) and his deputy Ziššawiš (Old Iranian *Čiçavauš), and those associated in the Elamite texts with the principal offices and officials of high rank or wide competence.

Miscellaneous Documents. The single document written in Greek script resembles Aramaic documents in its terseness, recording only an amount of wine and an Aramaic month-name ([PLATE VI](#), Fort. 1711 obverse). It has the impression of a seal that is also found on Elamite Fortification documents (Stolper and Tavernier, pp. 3 f., 24 f., Pompeo, 2015, pp. 157-67; 2017, pp. 9-16).

The single document written in Old Persian script and language resembles some of the Elamite Fortification documents, recording outlays of a dry commodity among five villages (PLATE VI, Fort. 1208-101). The seal impression has not been identified on other Fortification documents (Stolper and Tavernier, 2007, pp. 5-21).

The single document written in Babylonian script and language is not an administrative record, but a legal document recording the purchase of a slave at Persepolis in the reign of Darius. The parties and witnesses have Babylonian names and the document conforms to Babylonian conventions (Stolper, 1984, pp. 300-303). Transactions involving slaves are rarely mentioned in the Elamite Fortification texts (Henkelman, 2005, pp. 151-52).

The single document written in Phrygian script and language has not been interpreted (Brixhe, pp. 118-26).

Seal Impressions. Impressions of [cylinder seals](#) and stamp seals appear on Fortification documents of all kinds. In a few cases buttons, coins, or other objects were impressed instead of seals. Coins impressed on tablets include an Athenian tetradrachm and an Achaemenid [daric](#) (Starr; Root, 1988, pp. 8-12, 1989).

About 85 percent of the Elamite documents have impressions of seals, representing individuals or offices connected with the transactions that the documents record; impressions of up to six distinct seals appear on single tablets, but about 85 percent of the sealed tablets have impressions either of a single seal or of two seals. All of the Aramaic tablets have impressions of seals; impressions of up to four distinct seals occur, but about 90 percent have impressions either of a single seal or of two seals. All of the uninscribed tablets have impressions of seals; impressions of up to five seals occur, but about 85 percent have impressions either of a single seal or of two seals. About 15 percent of seals impressed on Aramaic tablets were also impressed on uninscribed or Elamite Fortification tablets. About 15 percent of seals impressed on uninscribed tablets were also impressed on Elamite and/or Aramaic tablets. To date, some 24 seals are known to occur on all three document types, Elamite, Aramaic and uninscribed. Stamp seals are more common on Aramaic tablets (ca. 34 percent) and uninscribed tablets (ca. 30 percent) than on Elamite tablets (ca. 15 percent; Root, 1996).

Inscriptions were cut into 170 or more of the seals impressed on the tablets,

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normally identifying the seal's original owner or his superior. About half the inscriptions are in Elamite, about a third in Aramaic, and a few each in Akkadian and Greek. Several give the name and title of the king in the three languages of the royal inscriptions, Old Persian, Elamite, and Akkadian (Garrison, 2002, pp. 71, 80-90; 2014a, 2017c.; Henkelman, 2008a, pp. 95-103).

Many of the seals impressed on Elamite tablets can be confidently associated with individuals named in the texts (e.g., the chief administrative officer Parnakka or his deputy Ziššawiš) or with offices occupied by several individuals (e.g., the seal used successively by two “chiefs of workers” [Elamite *kurdabattiš*, reflecting Old Iranian **grdapāti*]). Some seals belonged to offices with regional competence (for example, PFS 0001* used in transactions recorded in the immediate vicinity of Persepolis, PFS 0003 and PFS 0030 in the region around modern Kāmfiruz, PFS 0004* in the region around modern Fahliān).

Among the Elamite Fortification tablets, when a single seal was impressed, it commonly represents an individual or office of high rank and/or wide competence, and when two seals are impressed on memoranda, the seal used on the left edge commonly represents the individual or office that supplied the commodity involved in the transaction (Henkelman, 2008a, pp. 129-34; Root, 2008, pp. 106-8, Garrison, 2017b; Garrison and Henkelman). It is likely that comparable circumstances are implied by comparable patterns of seal use on at least some Aramaic Fortification tablets and at least some of uninscribed Fortification texts (Garrison, 2008, pp. 158-65, 183).

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