

Intern Project Description

Legrain Figurine Cards

This project is intended to make information contained on original analysis cards accessible to researchers around the world through digital tagging and transcriptions. The cards were created by Father Leon Legrain in the 1920s and 1930s and were the basis for an intended publication concerning the figural pieces from the ancient city of Ur. The volume never appeared due to budget concerns in the Great Depression. Therefore, these analysis cards are the only remaining evidence of the work Dr. Legrain conducted and they are stashed away in archives, rarely seen by anyone. By scanning the cards, we have already made them more accessible, but they are still not searchable. By tagging important information and typing digital transcriptions, we will succeed in making them much more useful for everyone.

There are more than 1700 such cards and we do not expect an intern to get through all of them. In fact, we are experimenting with the best way to record the information and this project is a pilot that may lead to a crowdsourced effort in the future. Our goal is to get through about two hundred cards and to understand their organization better. Therefore, the intern/s will not only be tagging cards but also making observations on categories we may need to add, or on better ways to make the information usable. Most importantly we want the intern to think about the information on the cards, not just record it. The categories we have noticed may not be the only ones that should be recorded and only by sharp observation can we truly learn from Legrain's analysis.

Legrain handwriting notes

Father Leon Legrain was the Penn Museum curator for the Babylonian Section from 1920-1948. He was an expert in ancient language and was the epigrapher (the one who dealt with ancient tablets) at the site of Ur on the 1924/1925 and 1925/1926 seasons. He wrote books on the seals and sealings of Ur and on the tablets. He was working on a book about the figurines, but this one was never published. His handwriting takes some getting used to. Here are some of the noticeable abbreviations and odd words he uses:

- _d = ed (past tense ending)
- _g = ing (participial ending)
- _y = ly (adverbial ending)
- _t = ment (such as used in pave_t [pavement] or fragment [Fr_t])
- fig. = figure or figurine
- l. = left, or can be length if in measurements
- r. = right
- h. = hand, or can be height if in measurements
- H_d = hand
- sh. = shoulder
- w. = with
- his ampersand looks like cf, but use the & key for it
- TC = terracotta

frit = a material that is essentially low-fired glass
faience = a material essentially the same as frit
mitre = a type of hat
offrant = offerant; one who offers (something to the gods)
fundat_s = foundations
connect. = connection
kaunakes = a type of flounced garment
Ningal = 'the great lady,' goddess consort to the moon god
Papsukal = a protective deity (also written Papsugal or Pap.su.gal)
Puzuzu = a Neo-Assyrian demon/deity (also written Pazuzu)
Humbaba = a demon/fiend fought by Gilgamesh
Nabonid. = Nabonidus, a Neo-Babylonian king
Temen. = temenos, a sacred or official area
Assyr. = Assyrian, a cultural/temporal designation
Babyl. = Babylonian, a cultural/temporal designation
Neo-Bab. = Neo-Babylonian, a cultural/temporal designation
Larsa = a temporal designator (and ancient city name)

See the three sample cards for areas of each card to be transcribed in blocks. Sometimes you will have to make decisions on what block takes information. For example, on the first sample card (with the picture of the clay pig) you will see that the word 'model_d' appears above the picture, but it is part of the description of the item and thus belongs in box 7. If you have trouble deciding where to put information, ask Brad or Kyra. Hopefully it will get easier to decide as you get more familiar with the cards, but not all cards are alike.

Type in words the way that Legrain spelled them (he often misspells but we need to be true to the text on the card). He also uses British spellings like chequer for checker. Some abbreviations will be unfamiliar, however, such as Dq., which stands for Diqdiqqeh, an area just outside of the main site of Ur. Other location abbreviations may be difficult to understand but know that the abbreviations in the upper center of the card tend to represent these excavation locations.

Some cards have photos attached, others have drawings, and still others have neither. We will indicate which is present. Sometimes, a card has a photo on the back of it and has thus been scanned separately. In this case, the second file (the scan of the back of the card) will have the letter A at the end of the filename. The photo would still apply to the card and does not need separate entry.

Legrain organized figurines of similar types together. The name of the category he felt described the type is usually written at the bottom of the card in blue pencil. This is an important observation but it may not always be consistent. Stick to the way he wrote it and always use the underscore _ to show a letter above the line (see the list at the top of this page for examples).

Most of all, try to understand what Legrain was recording and what patterns he was seeing in the figurines. You are the first to really examine these cards in about 80 years and we are doing more than digitizing, we are analyzing as well, learning alongside Father Legrain. If you have any questions don't hesitate to ask Brad or Kyra.