

Babylonian Collection
Yale University Library
New Haven, Connecticut

November 14, 1951

Mr. Seton Lloyd
İngiliz Arkeolođi Enstitüsü
Bayindir Sokak 85
Ankara, Turkey.

Dear Mr. Lloyd!

My colleague, Professor Goetze, has asked me to write you regarding the heat treatment of cuneiform tablets. Professor Goetze was in Ankara last summer, and learned of the extraordinary discovery of literary texts similar to those of the library of Ashurbanipal. He informs me that the Museum authorities at Ankara will wish to treat these tablets by a heating process, in order to prepare them for study. He believes that you will be good enough to transmit to the proper authorities the information given below. We offer the information because of our interest in and appreciation of the value of the tablets. We hope it may be found useful in caring for them.

The schedule for firing cuneiform tablets given below has been worked out, through practical experience in the Yale Babylonian Collection, over a period of twenty-five years. Subject to the conditions about to be mentioned, we believe entirely satisfactory results will be obtained, if this schedule is followed rigidly. The furnace used must be capable of producing heat as rapidly, or preferably more rapidly, than the schedule requires. It must be equipped with a controlling device which will positively regulate the heat at the will of the operator, within limits of accuracy of 10 to 20 degrees. The furnace must be capable of retaining its heat after the source is shut off, so that it will return to room temperature no sooner than twenty-four hours later and preferably forty-eight hours later. The tablets should be placed on open trays made of heat resisting wire woven so that air can circulate through the meshes of the weaving thus keeping the tablets in circulating air. An alloy of nickel and chromium is suitable for the wire, though an ordinary steel wire will serve the purpose for a few bakings. The rate of oxidation with steel wire is so rapid that it will become brittle and disintegrate in a relatively short time. If more than one layer of tablets is placed in the heating chamber at one time, the upper layer should be supported by a heat resisting metal frame which presents the minimum obstruction to the free circulation of air in the chamber. No tablets should be placed in contact with nor in immediate proximity to the source of heat. The schedule must be carried throughout the ten-hour period without interruption.

Bring temperature gradually from room temperature to 200 degrees Fahrenheit in 30 minutes.

Hold at	200	degrees	2	hours	with	furnace	door	open	
"	"	220	"	20	minutes				
"	"	250	"	25	"				
"	"	300	"	20	"				
"	"	350	"	25	"	then	close	furnace	door
"	"	400	"	20	"				
"	"	450	"	15	"				
"	"	500	"	10	"				
"	"	550	"	15	"				
"	"	600	"	15	"				
"	"	650	"	10	"				
"	"	700	"	15	"				
"	"	750	"	15	"				
"	"	800	"	10	"				
"	"	850	"	15	"				
"	"	900	"	10	"				
"	"	950	"	10	"				
"	"	1000	"	20	"				
"	"	1050	"	20	"				
"	"	1100	"	15	"				
"	"	1150	"	20	"				
"	"	1200	"	20	"				
"	"	1250	"	15	"				
"	"	1300	"	20	"				
"	"	1350	"	15	"				
"	"	1400	"	45	"				

Turn off electricity and leave furnace door closed until heat returns to room temperature.

Yours sincerely,

Ferris J. Stephens, Curator.