Cuneiform Inscriptions in the Archaeological Museum of Sulaimaniya

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In the spring of 2010, I had the pleasure to work in the Archaeological Museum of Sulaimaniya (Slemani) and assist the museum staff with the registration of the rich holdings of cuneiform tablets which the museum has been acquiring since 2005. This material stems from the south of Iraq and the majority of tablets date to the Ur III period and the early Old Babylonian period, with some older third millennium material.

The museum also owns various building inscriptions, some of which I was asked to examine during my stay. I am very grateful to Kamal Rashid, head of the Directorate of Antiquities of the Autonomous Kurdish Province of Sulaimaniya, and Hashim Hama Abdulla, director of the Archaeological Museum of Sulaimaniya, for their hospitality and their generous permission to publish the following brick inscriptions and prism fragments in their care. I would like to extend my thanks to the very helpful museum staff and to Zuhair Rajab Abdallah and Ahmad Kamil Mohammed (both University of Baghdad) for their kind assistance. I am much obliged to Peter Miglus (University of Heidelberg) for arranging my visit to Sulaimaniya.

1. Bricks of Šulgi of Ur, from Tell al-Wilayah

In March 2010, the Sulaimaniya Museum acquired four stamped bricks with an inscription of Šulgi of Ur (fig. 1). They have not yet been assigned inventory numbers. The bricks are of three different sizes. One

Figure 1.
brick is of the standard square shape and measures
32 × 32 × 7.5 cm. Two others are “half-bricks” and
measure 32 × 15 × 7.5 cm (one complete, one broken).
The last brick is of the rhomboid shape commonly
used for the lining of wells or water basins (24 × 31
× 19 × 7.5 cm). The same stamp was used for all four
bricks; its measurements are 10.5 × 9.5 cm (fig. 2).

Figure 2.

1 šul-šu
2 nita-ša-la-ga
3 lugal-Uri-ki-ma
4 lugal-an-ub-da-limmu₂-ba

Translation: (1-4) Divine Šulgi, mighty man, king
of Ur, king of the four world quarters.

1: Šulgi’s name is written with the determinative
marking divine names from the 20th year of his reign
onwards.

4: The title “king of the four world quarters” was
introduced in the 26th year of Šulgi’s reign. With
the exception of our inscription, the title “king of the four
world quarters” is used for Šulgi only in private dedica-
tions from Adab and Ur.

An exact duplicate of this inscription is provided
by a brick excavated as part of a water basin at Tell al-
Wilayyah. This brick (31 × 31 × 6.2 cm) was stamped
with the very same brick stamp used for the inscrip-
tion of the four Sulaimaniya bricks. The brick from
Tell al-Wilayyah was published in transcription, trans-
lation and as a photograph by T. Madhloom (Sumer
16, 1960, p. 91, pl. 11: brick B; the find spot is
indicated in plan IIa: area II). The brick is kept in the
Iraq Museum (IM 61778) The most recent edition is
found in D. Frayne, Ur III Period (2112-2004 BC)
(RIME 3/2), Toronto 1997, no. 3/2.1.2.47. Because of
this parallel find, the bricks in the Sulaimaniya Muse-
um certainly come from Tell al-Wilayyah and quite
possibly from the very same building of which
Madhloom only excavated a small section. The looters
may have used the old trenches as a starting point for
their own excavations.

Tell al-Wilayyah is thought to be the origin of an
important Ur III merchant archive, the so-called Turam-
ilili Archive (M. Van de Mieroop, JCS 38, 1986, 6; P.
Steinkeller, Sale Documents from the Ur III Period
(FAOS 17), Stuttgart 1989, 307; JCS 54, 2002, 26
[editor’s preface]). This hypothesis is further strength-
ened by the fact that many of the Ur III tablets which
the Sulaimaniya Museum acquired together with the
four bricks under discussion in March 2010 feature
Turam-ilili as their main protagonist.

J. N. Postgate (Sumer 32, 1976, 78-82) has pro-
posed to identify Tell al-Wilayyah with Keš, a hypo-
thesis which has been met with some approval, e.g. from
M. A. Powell, JNES 39, 1980, 51-52 and M. Sigrist,
Neo-Sumerian Archival Texts in the Nies Babylonian
Collection (Catalogue of the Babylonian Collection at
Yale 3), Bethesda 2001 who lists the texts belonging to
the Turam-ilili Archive as coming from Keš.

2. Fragment of a six-sided prism of Sennacherib
of Assyria, from Nineveh

This Neo-Assyrian prism fragment has been kept in
the Sulaimaniya Museum since 1981, registered there
under the inventory number SM 409. The museum
records offer no conclusive information regarding its
provenance, but from the text’s content it is clear that
it stems from Nineveh: the text deals with the con-
struction of the ekal kutalli, the arsenal constructed by
Sennacherib (r. 704-681 BC) on the mound of Nebi
Yunus.

The Sulaimaniya fragment features the remains of
the last two columns of a six-sided prism with a text
parallel to that of the Chicago Prism, kept in the
Oriental Institute (A 2793), published by D. D. Lucken-
bill, The Annals of Sennacherib (OIP 2), Chicago 1924
and assigned the siglum T16 in the catalogue of E.
Frahm, Einleitung in die Sandherib-Inschriften (AfO
Beih. 26), Vienna 1997, 102-105. The text of the
Sulaimaniya fragment corresponds to the lines 41-54
in column V and lines 26-45 in column VI of the
Chicago Prism. The fragment’s maximum preserved
height is 8.9 cm, the maximum preserved width of
column V (fig. 3) is 3.2 cm and of column VI (fig. 4)
is 6.8 cm.
Column V
Beginning broken away
1’ [...] im-hur-šu-nu-tī-ma
2’ [... ERIM.HI.A-šu KL.KAL×BAD-su ú-pa-hir-ma
GIŠ].GIGIR.MEŠ
3’ [... GIŠ.su-um-bi e-šu-ra ANŠE.KUR.RA.MEŠ
ANŠE].KUNGA.MEŠ
4’ [...] [is-ni qa ši-in-di-šu KUR.Par-su-āš KUR.An]-za-an
5’ [... KUR.Pa-še-ru KUR.Šl-li-pî LŪ.la-a]s-il
6’ [... LŪ.La-kab-ra LŪ.Ha-ar]zu-nu
7’ [... LŪ.Du-um-mu-qu LŪ.Su-[la-a-a
8’ [... LŪ.Sa-am-ū-na DUMU pN]MES]-A-SUM-na
10’ [... KUR.É-pN]Sil-la-na KUR.É-pN]Sa]-a-la
11’ [... UD.AG.KI URU.La-hi-ru LŪ.Pu-qt]u-du
12’ [... LŪ.Gam-bu-lum LŪ.Ha-la-tum LŪ.Ru-[u]-ú-a
13’ [... LŪ.Ū-bu-lum LŪ.Ma-la-hu LŪ.Ra]-pi-qu
14’ [... LŪ.Hi-in-da-ru LŪ.Da-mu-nu ki]-ru GAL-ū
15’ [... ik-te-ra it-tî-šu gi-ip-šu]-su-un
16’ [... ū-ru-uh KUR.UB.KI is-ba-[tu]-nim-ma
17’ [...] [a-na KÁ.DINGIR.RA.KI te-bu-ni a-dī pN]Šu-zu]-bi

Rest broken away

Column VI
Beginning broken away
1’ hur-ba-šu [MÊ-ia ki-na le-e]
2’ zu-mur-šš-um-[n is-hu-up GIŠ.za-ra-te-šš-un]
3’ ū-maš-šš-ru-ma a-[na šu-za-ub ZI.MEŠ-šš-nu]
4’ pag-rī ERIM.HI.A-šš-um-[u-da-i-iš šu e-ti-qu]
5’ ki-i ša at-mi TU.MUŠ[EN kušš-šu-di i-tar-ra-ku]
6’ lib-bu-šš-un ši-na-[iše-šš-un ū-sa-r-št-pu]
7’ qe-reb GIŠ.GIGIR.MEŠ-šš-um-[u-nu ma-mašš-šš-ru-ni]
8’ zu-ū-šš-un a-[na ra-da-di-šš-um GIŠ.GIGIR.MEŠ]
9’ ANŠE.KUR.RA.MEŠ-ia u-[ma-i]r EGIŠ-šš-un
10’ mun-na-rib-šš-um ša a-[n a nap-ša-a-te ū-šš-ū]
11’ a-sar i-kas-ša-du ū-[r-e-sa-bu i-na GIŠ.TUKUL]
12’ i-na U₄₄-me-šu-ma ul-tv É.GAL.MURUB₄₄-U[RU ša NINA.KI]
13’ a-na ri-mi-tit LUGAL-ti-ia ū-šak-[li-lu]
14’ a-na taq-rat kiṣ-šat UN.MEŠ lu-le-e ū-ma-lu-[šī]
15’ É.GAL ku-tal-li ša a-na šu-te-šur ka-[a-šī]
16’ pa qa-a-di ANŠE.KUR.RA.MEŠ sa-na-gi mimp-[ma šum-šū]
17’ ū-še-pi-šš LUGAL.MEŠ a-ši-kut mah-[ri
[AD.MEŠ-ia]
18’ tam-lu-šā ul ib-ši šu-bat-sa šu-uh[hu-rat-ma]
19’ la nu-ku-lat e-piš-taš ɨ-[a Riš U₄₄-me]
20’ tim-me-en-šā e-niš-ša iš-da-[a-šā ir-ma-a-
21’ i-qu-pa re-šā-a-šā É.[GAL šā-a-tu]

Rest broken away
Column I: The division of lines differs throughout from that of the Chicago Prism.

Column II: The division of lines differs from that of the Chicago Prism in lines 1′-7′ and 19′-21′. Variants: 1′: šu instead of šû in the Chicago Prism; 3′: ši instead of še in the Chicago Prism; 10′: šá instead of ša in the Chicago Prism; 14′: tab-rat instead of tab-ra-a-te in the Chicago Prism.

3. Fragment of a six-sided prism of Esarhaddon of Assyria, from Nineveh

This Neo-Assyrian prism fragment has been kept in the Sulaimaniya Museum since 1981, registered there under the inventory number SM 410 (fig. 5). The museum records offer no conclusive information regarding its provenance but from the text’s content it is clear that it originates from Nineveh.

The Sulaimaniya fragment is part of the final column of a six-sided prism. Preserved are the beginnings of 17 lines. Of these, however, due to the badly worn state of the fragment only line 16′ can be read with certainty: MÊ gi-mûr ERIM.HI.A šal-[la-at na-ki-ri]. This, meager as it is, proves sufficient to identify the fragment as a parallel text to one of the Nineveh versions of the annals of Esarhaddon (r. 680-669 BC), the only Neo-Assyrian inscriptions to feature this particular passage: R. Borger, Die Inschriften Asarhadons Königs von Assyrien (AFO Beith. 9), Graz 1956, 64: Episode 24: Nin. A, VI 60. The fragment’s pre-
served height is 7,3 cm, its maximum preserved width is 4,9 cm.

4. Bricks of Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon, from the Ebabbar at Larsa

The Sulaimaniya Museum acquired 88 stamped bricks of the Neo-Babylonian period in early 2010. They have not yet been assigned inventory numbers. The bricks measure $34 \times 34 \times 9.5$ cm. The inscription on these bricks consists of 13 lines of cuneiform text, written in the archaic ductus (fig. 6). Its content allows us to establish the bricks’ date, the reign of Nebuchadnezzar II (604-561 BC), and their provenance, the Ebabbar temple at Larsa. It is most likely that the looters destroyed the tiled floor of a courtyard within the temple complex in order to lift these bricks.

1 $^4$AG–NIG,DU–ŠEŠ
2 LUGAL Ša-bi-lu.KI
3 za-nin E,SAG.IL₂
4 ū E,ZI,DA
5 ap-lu SAG.KAL
6 ša $^4$AG–ap-lu–ŠEŠ
7 LUGAL Ba-bi-lu.KI
8 a-na-ku
9 E₂.BABBAR.RA E₂ ₂JTU
10 ša UD.UNUG.KI
11 ki-ma la-bi-rim-ma
12 a-na ₂UTU EN-ia
13 e-pa-us

Translation: (1-8) Nebuchadnezzar (II), king of Babylon, provider of the Esagil temple and of the Ezida temple, first son of Nabopolassar, son of Babylon, am I. (9-13) I built the Ebabbar temple, the house of Šamaš of Larsa, as of old for Šamaš, my lord.