

Notes on a New Inscription of Šar-kali-šarrī

DOUGLAS R. FRAYNE
University of Toronto

1. Introduction.

E. Sollberger has recently published a Neo-Babylonian copy of a royal inscription of the Old Akkadian king Šar-kali-šarrī in the British Museum.¹ Since the corpus of this king's inscriptions is not large nor his texts generally of great length, the new piece of seventy-one lines is a most welcome addition. We are thankful to Sollberger for his edition of this poorly preserved tablet.

One would be interested in finding the Old Akkadian original of this text, and an examination of some hitherto unplaced stone fragments of Old Akkadian date shows that the original text has in fact been known, at least in part, for some time.

What tipped off such an identification was the appearance in the Neo-Babylonian copy, col. iii 20-1, of a reference to the Upper Sea [t]i-a-am-tim ḡa-lī-tim. This recalled to the author the reference to the Upper Sea found in Lehmann-Haupt, *Materialien*, pp.6f. no.2, a stone fragment generally attributed to Narām-Sîn purchased at the mosque at Nineveh. To this piece Thompson, *Archaeologia* 79 pl.XLIII no.47, excavated at Nineveh, had already been joined.² The two joined pieces completely agreed with the Neo-Babylonian copy published by Sollberger, which was interesting, but since they were of a phraseology typical of several Narām-Sîn inscriptions there seem to be no proof that they were the original of the Sollberger piece. However, in checking more unplaced Old Akkadian stone fragments it was discovered that BM 98917 (CT 32 pl.5), also excavated by Thompson at Nineveh, joined the Lehmann-Haupt piece, the obverse of the BM piece being placed to the right of Lehmann-Haupt fragment. While the text of BM 98917 did not entirely agree with the transliteration of the Neo-Babylonian copy, it was easy to see how with a few minor modifications of the transliteration of this very poorly preserved portion of the tablet, it could be made to harmonize with it. Subsequent enquiries to the British Museum added two more unpublished stone fragments excavated at Nineveh by Thompson which probably belong to this tablet. The various

stone pieces duplicate perfectly twenty-three lines of the Neo-Babylonian copy, so there can be little doubt that they are the same text. I am very thankful to C.B.F. Walker for tracking down the new material for me and for offering a number of perceptive comments into the nature of the inscription as a whole.

The discovery of the original Old Akkadian pieces is important not only in its own right but also because it enables us to correctly read col.iv of the obverse, a section which is too badly worn on the Neo-Babylonian copy to give a reliable reading. In addition, I. Finkel kindly collated the end of the Neo-Babylonian copy and was able to offer some new readings for which I thank him.

2. Edition.

Text of Šar-kali-šarrī dealing with the construction of the Inanna temple in Zabala.

A. Exemplars.

A BM 38302 (80-11-12,184), Sollberger, *Diakonoff Festschrift* pp.345ff. (1-71 and colophon).

B₁ Thompson, *Archaeologia* 79, no.49 (2-4).

B₂ Lehmann-Haupt, *Materialien*, no.2 (9-12; 19-21).

B₃ BM 98917 (Th. 1905-4-9,423), King, *CT* 32, pl.5 (19-22; 28-33; 40-2).

B₄ BM 98919 (Th. 1905-4-9,425), published here³ (26-7).

B₅ BM 98918 (Th. 1905-4-9,424), King, *CT* 32, pl.5 (38-9).

B₆ BM 128215 (Th. 1929-10-12,871), published here⁴ (unplaced).

³See fig. 1. I would like to thank the trustees of the British Museum for permission to publish BM 98919 and BM 128215.

⁴See fig. 2. Unfortunately this piece cannot be made to fit the text as known from the Neo-Babylonian copy. Concerning it Walker writes (letter of 15 Dec. 1983) 'It seems to be in the same reddish stone with the same size of script and same vertical width between the lines.'

¹E. Sollberger, 'A New Inscription of Šar-kali-šarrī', *Societies and Languages of the Ancient Near East, Studies in Honour of I.M. Diakonoff*, pp. 345ff.

²See H. Hirsch, *AfO* 20 (1963) p.18 no.4.

understanding.

58: The form *ib-tu-qū* suggests the verb is plural but the change from previous singular subject is unexpected.

B. General Discussion.

I. The content of the piece.

Although a number of events are narrated, the text is basically concerned with the construction of the temple of Inanna in Zabala. This is the first deed mentioned in the text after the king's titles and seems to indicate the purpose for which the stone as a whole was inscribed. It may be compared with the bricks and brick stamps of Šar-kali-šarrī found in the Ekur complex in Nippur which read simply: *šar-kà-lí-šār-rí lugal a-kà-dè^{ki} ba-dím é^d en-líl⁵ 'Šar-kali-šarrī, king of Akkad builder of the temple of Enlil.'* By analogy we might expect that the Nineveh tablet came originally from the Inanna temple in Zabala. The theme is taken up again at the end of the text which refers to the cedar in the Amanus range which was cut down in order to make an extension for the Inanna temple, presumably once again the Inanna temple in Zabala.

What is noteworthy in this text, as Sollberger has noted, is that everything that is narrated are deeds which Narām-Sîn of Akkad is known to have done; the construction of the temple of Inanna in Zabala,⁶ the crushing of the great revolt,⁷ the reaching of the sources of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers,⁸ and the travelling to the Amanus mountains.⁹ Is it possible that the Neo-Babylonian copyist had a broken original text of Narām-Sîn at his disposal with the royal name missing and he mistakenly restored the name of Šar-kali-šarrī in the lacuna? It is extremely unfortunate that the original stone pieces studied here do not provide us with the royal name.

II. The typology of the text.

As reconstructed here, the original text seems to have been a rectangular stone tablet about 29 × 25 × 7.7 cm. But what kind of object was it? The colophon indicates that the Neo-Babylonian copy was made

from a na-rú-a of mar-ḥuša stone.¹⁰ Marhuša stone is fairly well attested from textual sources,¹¹ but we do not know what kind of stone it was. CAD suggests a connection with Marḥaši, a land east of Elam.¹² The B stone fragments all have a distinct reddish hue, at least on one side,¹³ and therefore the term may have something to do with Sumerian ḥuša 'red'.¹⁴

Since the term na-rú-a can refer to either a monumental stele or a foundation tablet¹⁵ the question arises as to which one our piece was. Our reconstruction of the text is unlike most steles in that the inscription fills the entire stone with no reliefs or blank fields. The signs on the reverse are inscribed upside down with respect to those on the obverse. While it is true that the piece could have been displayed on its right edge, one reading the boxes down, as we find, for example, in the stele of the Hammurapi Lawcode, this would have entailed reading the 'columns' on the obverse from top to bottom and on the reverse from bottom to top. Such an arrangement is not found in any other stele that I am aware of and argues against the piece being a display stele.

A simpler explanation is to see the piece as a stone foundation tablet. In order to read the text one simply flips the stone as in reading a clay tablet. If the Nineveh text is in fact a foundation tablet, then this piece joins the small fragments in Leiden published by van Driel¹⁶ as the second example of an Old Akkadian foundation tablet.

III. The provenance of the text.

While the Lehmann-Haupt piece was purchased from the mosque at Nebi-Yunus, the other pieces were all excavated by Thompson from the Nabû temple at Nineveh.¹⁷ If the original text is indeed a foundation tablet from the Inanna temple in Zabala, the question arises as to what it was doing in Nineveh. Presumably the piece had been taken there from the south, possibly as booty, as a result of the action of some Assyrian king, such as Sennacherib who is known to have campaigned in the south.¹⁸ Its find is

⁵See Hilprecht, BE 1 no.3.

⁶Cf. RTC 86,106, 144: *in 1 mu^d na-ra-am-d^d EN.ZU uš-še¹¹ é^d en-líl in nibru^{ki} r^u7 é^d inanna in zabala^{ki} iš-ku-nu* 'In one year Narām-Sîn lay the foundation of the Enlil temple in Nippur and of the Inanna temple in Zabala.'

⁷For text references to this event see P. Michalowski, JCS 32 (1980), p.240, n. 19.

⁸See I. J. Gelb, MAD 1, nos. 231; 236: *in 1 mu^d na-ra-am-d^d EN.ZU na-gáb idigna.i; 'u buranun.i; ik-šu-dú REC 169 šē-nam-in-dá^{ki} èš-a-ru ...* 'In one year Narām-Sîn reached the source of the Tigris and Euphrates and defeated Šenaminda.' For the reading Šenaminda see B. Foster, ZA 72 (1982) p.15.

⁹See H. Hirsch, AfO 20 (1963) p.74, Narām-Sîn b5 col.1 21f.: *ù a-ma-nam ša-dú^{giš} erin ù ti-a-am-tam a-lí-tam i-qi-š-š[um]-ma* '[And Nergal] gave him the Amanus, the cedar forest and the Upper Sea ...'

¹⁰Lines 72-3 collated by I. Finkel.

¹¹See CAD M¹ p.281.

¹²On Marḥaši see most recently, P. Steinkeller, 'The Question of Marḥaši', ZA 72 (1982) pp.237ff.

¹³C.F.B. Walker, letter of 15 Dec. 1983.

¹⁴See B. Landsberger, JCS 21 (1967), pp.149f.

¹⁵See CAD N¹ pp.366f. sub *narú* 3a and 3b.

¹⁶See G. van Driel, Festschrift Böhl p.106.

¹⁷From sector v,7. See Archaeologia 79 (1929) pl.XLIII no.47 and pl.LXIII.

¹⁸We have, for example, a copy on a tablet from Nineveh of a royal seal taken from Babylon to Assyria by Sennacherib, see Grayson ARI 1 §§825-8.

paralleled by the discovery of a stone foundation tablet of Šulgi from Kutha also found at Nineveh.¹⁹

Whether Nergal-šumī-ibni made his copy from the original in the Nabū temple in Nineveh is not certain but seems a distinct possibility.

Fig. 1

B₄ = BM 98919

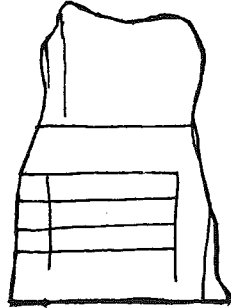


Fig. 2

B₆ = BM 128215

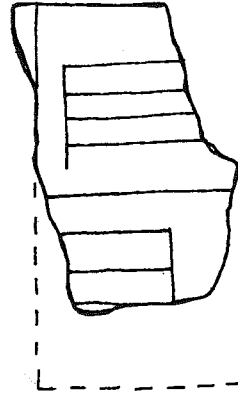
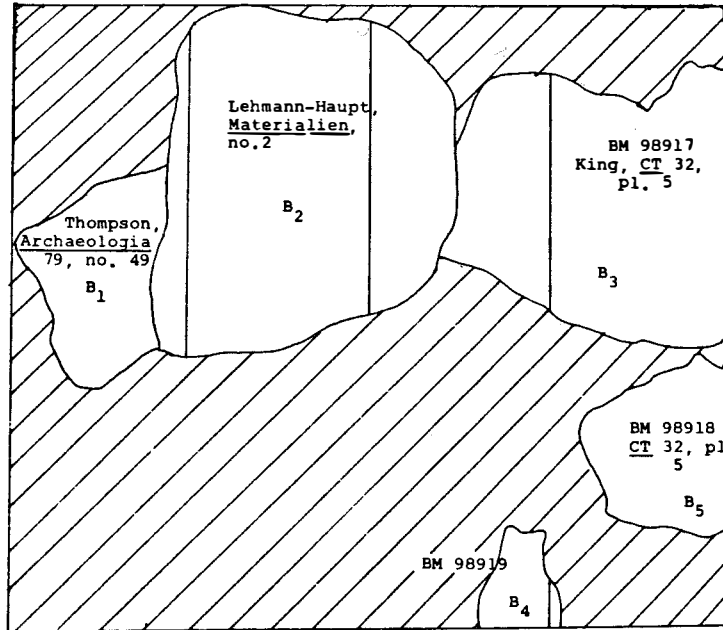
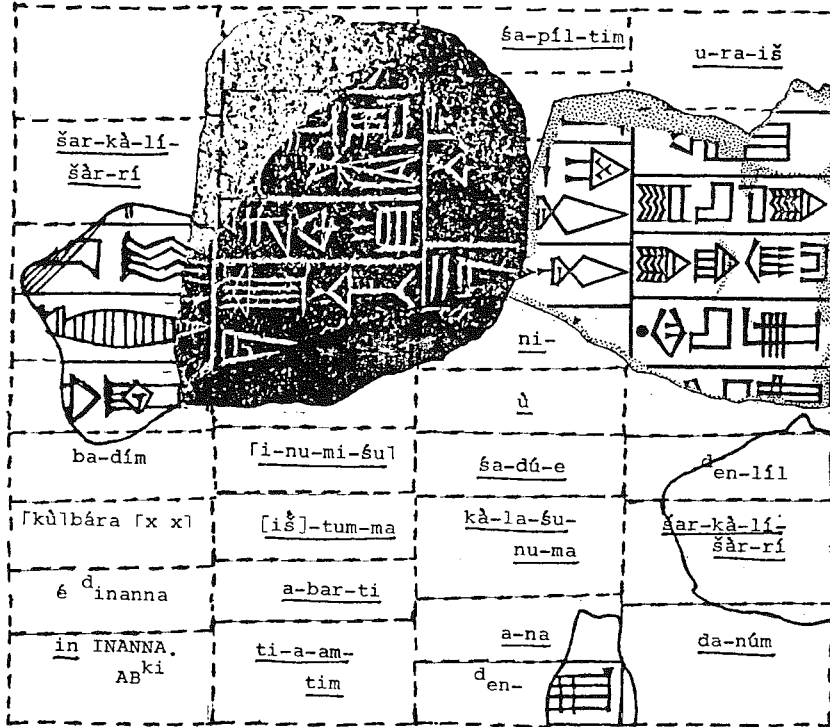


Fig. 3



¹⁹See Amiaud, 'L'inscription assyrienne de Doungi', ZA 3, pp. 94-5 said to come from Nineveh. Corresponding to the Neo-Babylonian copy of the Šar-kali-šarrī original text in Nineveh studied here published by Sollberger there is also a late copy of the Šulgi foundation tablet originally from Kutha, see CT 9, pl.3, BM 35389.

Fig. 4 OBVERSE



REVERSE

