

Hammurapi and the Wall of the Cloister

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Ashmolean 1922.183 is a brick fragment inscribed in an early Old Babylonian monumental hand with the first 21 lines of a royal inscription. Langdon published a copy of this brick in OECT 1 pl.30c. Unfortunately, the provenance of the brick was not known when it was acquired by the museum. This, coupled with the fact that the beginning of the brick, where we would expect to find the name of the ruler responsible for the erection of the structure from which it came, is largely worn away, meant that the attribution of the brick, even to the extent of the dynasty to which it belonged, has been in doubt since its publication. Langdon made no suggestion in this connection.¹ W. Hallo, probably because of the mention of the sun god Utu in the text, suggested that it might be a text of the Larsa dynasty listing it in his bibliography² as text one of Rīm-Sîn. This designation was followed by I. Kärki, who provided the first transliteration of the text based on Langdon's copy.³ R. Borger, presumably noting what appears to be a -na in the first line of Langdon's copy suggested that the text might be one of Sîn-iddinam.⁴ However, Walker, having collated the text, noted⁵ that the script of the brick is quite different from the other bricks of Sîn-iddinam, thus throwing this attribution into doubt. Walker did note that the script was of an early Old Babylonian hand.

The content of the brick inscription itself available in Langdon's copy does give a general idea of an attribution of the piece. In lines 19–20 of the copy we read:

b[à]d-gá-gi₄-a ḫu-mu-dù
'I⁶ built the wall of the cloister.'

¹S. Langdon, OECT 1 p.60: '183- stamped brick with an inscription on the face'. The brick is actually inscribed. The inscription runs down the edge of the brick, although this would not be clear from the evidence available to Langdon.

²W. Hallo, BiOr 18 (1961) p.10.

³I. Kärki, Die Sumerischen Königsinschriften der Frühaltbabylonischen Zeit, p.71; Die Sumerischen und Akkadischen Königsinschriften der Altbabylonischen Zeit, pp.141–2.

⁴R. Borger, HKL 1 p.285: 'nach den Spuren in z. 1 möchte ich eher an Sîn-iddinam von Larsa denken.'

⁵C.B.F. Walker, Cuneiform Brick Inscriptions, p.129.

⁶That the text is in the first person is indicated by the reference to ^dutu lugal-mu 'Utu, my lord' in line 4.

Although gá-gi₄-a's 'cloisters' were not restricted just to the city of Sippar,⁷ the most famous gagia was that of the god Sāmaš in that city and virtually all our text references to gagia's refer to that structure. That the Ashmolean piece refers to the gagia in Sippar is now confirmed by the discovery of a duplicate of the brick in Istanbul, discussed below, which comes from Sippar. Bearing in mind the Old Babylonian script of the brick we might expect that the brick belongs to the first dynasty of Babylon, whose kings lavished a great deal of effort on the city of Sippar. Hammurapi claims to have built the wall of the gagia in his fourth year⁸ and Ammi-ditana in his eighteenth year.⁹ It is among these rulers that we would expect to ascribe the Ashmolean brick.

In collation work in Istanbul¹⁰ I luckily came upon an unpublished duplicate of the Ashmolean brick in the Museum of the Ancient Orient, EŞ 9044.¹¹ The Istanbul piece is also a fragment, containing the end of the inscription, and has a six line overlap with the Ashmolean piece in the middle of the complete text. Like the Ashmolean piece it is an inscribed brick with the text running down the edge of the brick. The width of the edge is completely preserved in both exemplars being 8.0 cm in the Ashmolean piece and 8.8 cm in the Istanbul example. Although the bricks are otherwise fragmentary the original dimensions were probably roughly the same. The Istanbul Museum Inventory lists EŞ 9004 as coming from Sippar and was presumably obtained through Scheil's excavations at the site, although the brick is not mentioned in his description of the finds.¹² This may

⁷See CAD G, sub gagû, discussion at the bottom of p.10b.

⁸See Ungnad, RLA 2 p.178 no.106. R. Harris, Ancient Sippar, p.3, claims that Immerum, an independent ruler of Sippar who preceded the Old Babylonian kings, also built the cloister, but the evidence cited for this, the date formula found on VAS 8 no.102 should probably be assigned to Hammurapi, as Horsnell, The Yearnames of the First Dynasty of Babylon [unpublished University of Toronto thesis] p.172, has done.

⁹See Ungnad, RLA 2 p.188 no.229.

¹⁰As part of the work of the Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Project sponsored by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

¹¹I am thankful to the authorities of the Museum of the Ancient Orient, Istanbul for permission to publish this brick and to V. Donbaz, who kindly prepared a copy of it.

¹²See M. V. Scheil, Une Saison de Fouilles à Sippar, p.140. Here Scheil lists a number of bricks none of which is our

be because the attribution of the piece was not evident because of its fragmentary nature. I was also able to collate the Ashmolean piece anew.¹³ This collation revealed that the name of Hammurapi is indeed found in the first line of the Ashmolean brick, confirming the correlation of this royal inscription with the Hammurapi year formula. Herewith follows an edition of the text based on the two bricks.¹⁴

A Ash. 1922.183, inscribed brick, 22.0*x6.0*x8.0 cm

B Eš 9044, inscribed brick, 22.0*x7.8*x8.8 cm

* not complete original dimension

A B

1. ḫa^d-[am]-ḫmu^d-ra-ḫpi^d
2. lu[gal-kala-ga?]
3. lu[gal]-KA.DINGIR.RA^{ki?}
4. u^d ḫutu lugal-mu
5. x x x a
6. x x x x ni
7. x UD? x x x
8. dagal-e-dè
9. ḫinim^d in-ḫdu^d11-ga-a^d
10. ḫgiš^d in-tuk-ni-me-en
11. ḫù-ḫùl ma-an-dé
12. ḫá^d-bi ḫu-mu-da-an-ág
13. u^d-ba
14. igi-gál diri-dè
15. a-gàr a-gar-ra
16. e ḫu-mu-si-ga
17. úgu-ba
18. bàd gá-gi^d-a
19. ḫu-mu-dù
20. šà-ḫa
21. i^d-a-a-ḫé-gál
22. ḫu-mu-ba-al
23. a-nam-ḫé
24. ḫé-bí-dé
25. ḫam-bi-šè
26. a-a
27. nin-zimbir^{ki}
28. ḫé-[en]-ši-ḫùl-le
29. ki-^dutu
30. nita-dam-ni-da
31. ti-ḫu^d-sù^d-rá
32. ḫbala^d-[n]am-[...]
33. ḫsuḫuš^d? ḫé?-x x
34. [...] ḫé-en-ḫši^d-[...]
35. [...] sag-e-[éš]
36. [ḫa-ma-ab-rig^d-ge]

Hammurapi brick.

¹³Permission to examine this brick and to publish a new copy here is granted through the courtesy of the Visitors of the Ashmolean Museum.

¹⁴I would like to thank Professor M. Civil who made a number of suggestions to me for the reading of various lines.

Textual variants.

17: B omits this line.

21: A omits DINGIR in ^da-a.

Translation.

Hammurapi, [mighty king?], ki[ng? of Babylon?], when Utu, my lord, in order to widen his ..., I being one who heeds his spoken decree, spoke to me joyously, and commissioned me, at that time, in order to increase understanding, I piled up a dike in the flooded field and upon it built the wall of the cloister. In its [the field's] midst I dug the canal Aya-hegal and poured abundant water in it. On account of this may Aya, the lady of Sippar rejoice and with Utu her husband ... and gr[ant to me] a life of long days, a reign of [goodness?], and a [firm] foundation.

Commentary.

2f.: These are probably to be restored [lugal kala-ga] lu[gal KÁ.DINGIR.RA^{ki}] based on the standard epithets of Hammurapi found in other royal inscriptions.

6: This line was read x TE TE by Kärki based on Langdon's copy but the worn nature of the line makes any reading uncertain.

8: Although the DINGIR sign is really not clearly visible inside the slightly worn DAGAL sign the reading dagal seems reasonably certain since we expect a verb before the -dè ending.

9f.: These two lines both containing participial forms are a kind of parenthetical statement stressing that Hammurapi is one who obeys the commands of the gods. The Sumerian says literally 'I am his (Utu's) heeder of the spoken word.' The sign after the -tuk could be either -ni or another -tuk sign.

12: Although the á sign is not clear at the beginning of the line we can hardly expect anything different in connection with the -ág at the end. In the context the reading makes excellent sense. The traces at the beginning exclude a reading ki-.

14: Although the final horizontal of the IGI sign at the beginning of the line in A is missing, the sign can hardly be anything else.

16: Cf. Nabnitu xvi 64 (MSL xvi p.143) si-g[a]: šá-pa-ku šá i-ki 'to pile up a dike'.

18: This construction is commemorated in the name of Hammurapi's fourth year. Cf. for example mu bàd gá-gi^d-a gibil mu-[u]n-dù 'The year he built the wall of the new cloister', CT 8 18b. For a complete listing of the various examples of this year formula, see M. Horsnell, *The Yearnames of the First Dynasty of Babylon* (unpublished University of Toronto thesis, 1974) pp.171-3.

20: The šà-ba 'in its midst' presumably refers back to the flooded field not the wall of the cloister the immediate antecedent, since the latter would not make sense. This is supported by the fact that the canal ^daya-hegal is described in an early Old

Babylonian source (RSO 2, p.539,1) as running beside the plain *i-na ba-ma-tim ita nār* ^da.a.ḫé-gál.

21: The digging of the Aya-hegal canal is commemorated in the name of the eighth year of Sîn-muballit, Hammurapi's father, cf. King LH 2 no.101 II:36' mu i, ^da.a.ḫé-gál mu-un-ba-al. This tells us that Hammurapi merely re-dug the canal to pile up the dike on which the cloister wall was built. This also tells us that the cloister at Sippar, at least in Hammurapi's time, fronted on the Aya-hegal canal.

23: Literally 'the water of abundance'.

34: Should we perhaps restore here [igi-ni] ḫé-en-ši-[-bar-rej]?

36: This line, restored on the basis of Warad-Sîn 4 l. 27, is merely a suggestion. The Warad-Sîn text, a stone tablet dealing with the construction of the wall of Ur, is quite similar to the Hammurapi brick although parallels could undoubtedly be found in a number of inscriptions.

