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THE SARGONIC VICTORY STELE FROM TELLOH

By BENJAMIN R. FOSTER

I. Introduction

The Sargonic victory stele from Telloh is one of the most celebrated works of art from third millennium Mesopotamia. Two fragments, one inscribed (AO 2679 = Pl. III) and one with relief (AO 2678 = Pl. II), have been known since 1893,¹ and all who have examined them agree that the two fragments very probably belong to the same monument.² Because of the incomplete inscription, the monument has generally been dated on art historical grounds to sometime between the reigns of Sargon and Naram-Sin.³ The purpose of this study is three-fold: to publish a newly identified fragment of this stele, to offer a new interpretation for the entire monument, and to propose a precise dating and historical context for it.

II. The Yale Fragment (Pl. IV and Figs. 2, 4).

YBC 2409⁴ is of white limestone, and was at least twice reused (in antiquity?) as a door socket. As a result, the stone is heavily damaged. To judge from its accession number, the piece was acquired by Yale before 1915. Remains of three bands of inscription are found on one side. A glance at the photograph (Pl. IV) will show that this stone is strikingly similar in appearance to AO 2679. Samples of AO 2679 and YBC 2409 were analysed by Catherine Skinner, Yale University (see Appendix II). Her analysis showed that the two stones are mineralogically identical. That the two stones are actually parts of the same monument is shown by the following measurements of the bands of writing on each:

width of band	AO 2679 (Face B)	YBC 2409
ii'	45 mm	x + 39 mm
iii'	47 mm	47 mm
iv'	45 mm	46 mm

¹ Heuzey, *Déc. Chal.* I, 198 ff.; *RA* 3 (1893), 113 ff.; the inscription was edited by Thureau-Dangin, *Revue Sémitique* 1897/5, 166–173; cf. *SAKI*, 171. The stone was presented to France by the Sultan in 1896.

² I have examined both the Louvre fragments side by side. AO 2678 is smoother and slightly yellower in colour, owing perhaps to its long period of public display. AO 2679 has a greater tendency to flake. I would herewith express my warmest thanks to Béatrice André-Leicknam, curator of Near Eastern inscriptions at the Louvre, for allowing me to study the Louvre pieces, and for patiently dealing with my numerous inquiries. I am grateful to the Griswold Fund of Yale University, which paid my travel costs. My initial study of the piece was greatly assisted by J.-P. Grégoire, who generously sent me detailed measurements and sketches of the Louvre fragments.

³ E. Strommenger, *Fünf Jahrtausende Mesopotamien* (Munich, 1962), Pl. 117: "Reichsakkadisch II/III"; A. Moortgat, *The Art of Ancient Mesopotamia*, trans. J.

Filson (New York, 1969), 49: "must, on stylistic grounds, be older than Naram-Sin's victory stele . . . and yet on the other hand it is clearly later than the Sargon stele from Susa . . . It must therefore belong to the second Akkadian generation, that of Enheduanna and Manišusu." Much the same observations were already made by Heuzey, *RA* 3 (1898), 117. A. Parrot, *The Dawn of Art: Sumer* (New York, 1961), 172 dates the piece to the time of Rimuš. For a full bibliography and remarks, see J. Börker-Klähn, *Alt Vorderasiatische Bildstelen und vergleichbare Felsreliefs* (Mainz am Rhein, 1982), 130 f. The most detailed iconographical study of the relief is P. Amiet, *L'Art d'Agadé au Musée du Louvre* (Paris, 1976), 25 f., to which I owe many insights.

⁴ I am grateful to Ulla Kasten for drawing this stone to my attention, and to William W. Hallo, Curator of the Yale Babylonian Collection, for permission to publish it. I thank also Karen Polinger Foster for some valuable suggestions, and for preparing Figs. 1 and 2.

Although the width of the bands can vary a millimetre or two depending on where they are measured, there can be no doubt that the bands of inscription on both the Yale and Louvre fragments are the same width. A further test is provided by two individual cases, AO 2679 iii' 7' and YBC 2409 iii 2', each of which contains two words and a numeral: šu-nigin × GÁNA. These cases are identical in size, the first being $47 \times 11/10$ mm, the second $47 \times 9/10$ mm.

The dimensions of the Yale fragment (see Appendix I) show that its inscribed face cannot be the same face as either the obverse or the reverse of the Louvre piece. The only reconstruction possible is to posit at least three and possibly four inscribed sides. I follow Thureau-Dangin in assuming that the inscription began on the "face antérieure" of AO 2679, and concluded with the historical portion of the inscription. I rename the "face antérieure" of AO 2679 "Face A", the inscribed surface of YBC 2409 "Face B," the reverse of AO 2679 "Face C," and the lost narrow face corresponding to the inscribed face of YBC 2409 "Face D", see Fig. 1. So far as can be determined from manipulation of a cast, YBC 2409 does not actually join AO 2679, although Face C of each piece might just touch below the inscription.

Note that on Face B the ends of registers ii' and iii' are preserved (Fig. 4), and one can reasonably infer the end of register iv' at the end of the last case. This shows that Face B stops just short of a corner of the original stele. When the fragment was made into a door socket, the wider, inscribed surface (Face C) was used for the top. This abraded the inscription and the smooth face, but did not quite reach the ends of registers ii' and iii' on the non-worn surface of the socket. To judge from the slight outset of register iv', the monument may have sloped very gradually inwards towards the top on two or four sides, like the Obelisk of Maništusu, but this is uncertain, so is not taken into account in Fig. 1.

The major dimensional problem is that the widest preserved thickness of AO 2678 (Appendix I) is somewhat greater than that of the highest preserved part of AO 2679. Detailed study of AO 2678 suggests that it may have been flat on one side and curved on the other, rather like a cuneiform tablet. The curvature suggests that it curved inward again towards the bottom of the relief. Thus the preserved centre of Face 2 of the relief bulged slightly in the middle, while Face 1 was flat all the way down. I cannot account for this nor offer a parallel.

III. *The Inscription* (AO 2679 (+) YBC 2409).

The composite text reads as follows:

AO 2679	Face A
1') [] x
2') []
3') []
4') [] [gi]
5') []
6') []
7') [] AB [] GÁNA	
8') [nu]-[bànda]* Mar*-[tu]-[x?]-[ne]	
9') [] [ti]
10') [GÁ]NA ù [DÙG][KU ₄]	

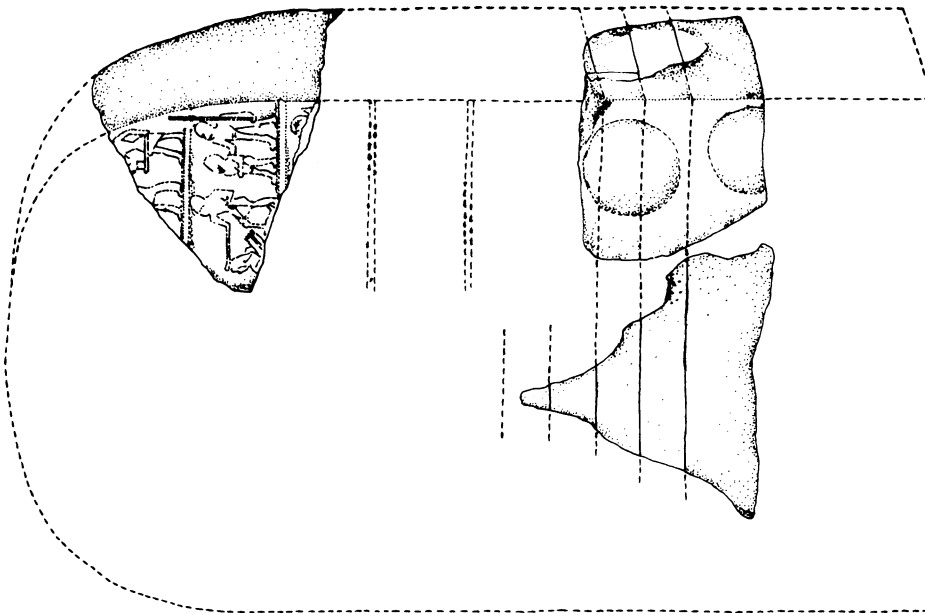


Fig. 1.

Fig. 1. Proposed Reconstruction of Victory Stele, Showing Faces B and C of Inscription, Face 2 of Relief.

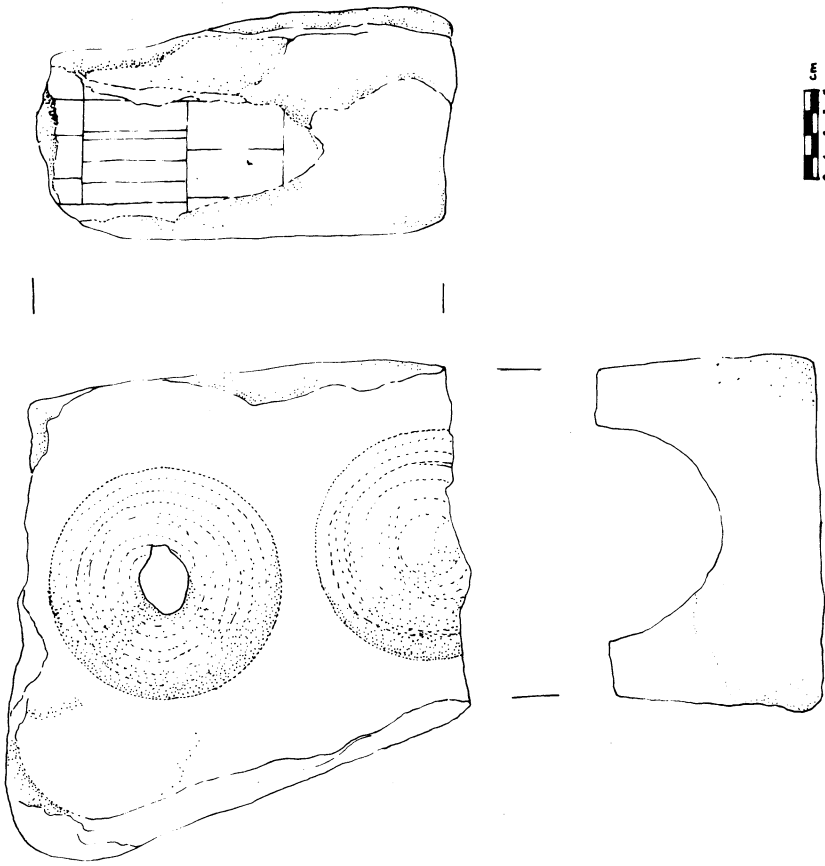


Fig. 2.

Fig. 2. YBC 2409, Side and End View.

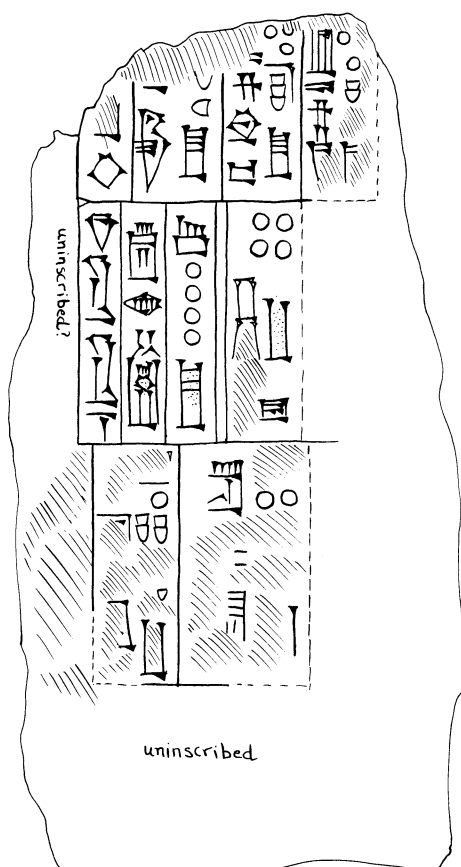


Fig. 4. YBC 2409, Inscription.

YBC 2409 iii'

1') (4 × 1800) GÁNA Ambar- \lceil nina $\rceil^{[ki]}$ (?)
(space)

2') šu-nigin (4×1800) GÁNA

3') Mir-ki-ág

4') ì-rá-rá-me

(break in register?)

AO 2679

$$x + i') \left[\begin{array}{c} \text{ } \\ \text{ } \\ \text{ } \end{array} \right] \dot{x} \quad (\text{space})$$
$$2') \left[\begin{array}{c} \vdots \\ \vdots \\ \vdots \end{array} \right] \dot{x}$$

3) [] sag

4') [] sukkal

5') $(5^? \times 1800)$ GÁNA Ambar-Lagaš^{ki}

6') (5×1800) GÁNA GÍR.GÍR.MAH

7') sŭ-nigin 18,000 GÁNA

- 8') *U-se^dMa-lik*
 9') [n]u-bànda Mar-tu-[x?]-[ne]
 10') [GÁ]NA
 YBC 2409 iv'
 1') (x + 2 × 1800) GÁNA
 Da-x-x
 2') [šù-nigin] 1800 + 400 [+x? +?] 1 GÁNA
 [Ambar]-[Nina]^[ki]
 AO 2679
 x + 1') [] [GÁNA]
 [G]I DÙG
 (space)
 2') [] GÁNA
 3') [] x
 4') [Na]-[b]a-lu₅
 5') [NAG]AR?.GAL
 (space)
 6') šu-nigin (5 × 6,480,000?) + (5 × 1,080,000?) + 108,000 + (3 × 18,000)
 + (4 × 1800) + 2 × 600 + 100 + 25 GÁNA
 7') šu-nigin 17 uru-sag
 8') šu-nigin 8 maš-ga-na-sag
 (space)
 9') A-ga-dè^{ki}
 10') nam-lugal
 11') šu ba-ab-ti-a-ta
 12') [Rí-mu-u]š(?)
 (breaks off)

After enumerating various areas of land and personal names or titles, the text reads as follows:

“Total: 1328.9 square kilometres of land,

Total: 17 important towns,

Total: 8 important villages.

After he received kingship in Agade, [Rimu]š, [king of Kish . . .]”

Remarks to the text:

ii'

1': Cf. *RGTC* 1, 40.

2': Cf. *RGTC* 1, 40.

3': This name is too common in the Girsu archives to identify.

4': The element DÙG occurs in the field name DÙG.KU₄ (*RTC*, 141–143) and GI.DÙG (*ITT* I, 1400), but neither of these fits the traces well.

x + 2': Attested in Sargonic sources only here, but cf. Pettinato, *UNL* No. 610.

3': Attested in Sargonic sources only here, but cf. Pettinato, *UNL* No. 785.

iii'

1': Cf. *RGTC* 1, 13; add Donbaz-Foster, *STTI*, 83 L. 2950, 135 L. 4606.

3': I understand, “Mir-ki'ag (of the) oil procurers.” The name occurs in the Girsu archives fairly frequently, but mostly of workmen: *ITT* II, 2994, 3137, 4356, 5699;

RTC, 98 rev. 9'; hence I see no connection between these attestations and this person. Nor can I find another case of "oil procurers" holding land in Sargonic records.

5': Cf. *RGTC* 1, 30; add Donbaz-Foster, *STTI*, 178 L. 9369, 180 L. 9421.

6': Known in other Sargonic sources as GÍR.GÍR: Donbaz-Foster, *STTI*, 14 L. 1152, 122 L. 4481, 149 L. 4695.

8': The name and (military?) rank attested only here in Sargonic sources, so far as I know.

x + 4': For this name, compare *ITT* I, 1195; *ITT* II, 3089, but there is no reason to think that they are the same as this person; nor can I attest the title NAGAR.GAL "chief carpenter" in the Girsu archives.

x + 6': Collation of the broken figures, as would be expected, confirms Thureau-Dangin's remarks of 1897: "Il y a incertitude en raison de l'état fruste des six premiers chiffres qu'on ne peut restituer que par conjecture (il est en particulier à noter qu'on ne distingue aucune trace de barres transversales)," *Revue Sémitique* 1897/5, 168. I could distinguish only five figures in the left-hand group, and none of them has anything inscribed nor any transverse wedges, as Thureau-Dangin stated. The circles are 5 mm in diameter, the same size as the outer circles of the sar'u signs to the right. This means that the signs in the left group must be symbols of greater magnitude than sar'u. This problem has already been discussed by Diakonoff, *Obščestvennyj i gosudarstvennyj stroj drevnego Dvureč'ja: Šumer* (Moscow, 1959), 11 note 4, quoting there a collation by Nougayrol. He proposed, correctly I believe, to read the left hand figures as 3600 bur, that is, six times as large as sar'u, on the analogy of the proportion of sár to bur'u (1:6), the difference between which is indicated in the same way.

x + 7': For uru-sag, see Hallo, *JCS* 23 (1970), 60 f., where this context is noted. Here the word must mean something like "important towns" or the like, not "capital cities," and maš-ga-na-sag must mean something like "important villages". Note that the towns outnumber the villages, a relationship that fits well with the population distribution of the Central Euphrates floodplain in the Akkadian period, though not so well with the recorded hierarchy of sizes presented by R. Mc. Adams, *Heartland of Cities* (Chicago, 1981), 139. See also F. Carroué, *Actes du Colloque de Cartigny 1979* (Leuven, 1982), 102 ff. Collation shows that another šu-nigin was entered by the engraver in case x + 8', then erased: was a third total of smaller villages originally intended?

x + 12': I restore Rimuš here with considerable reserve, as I was led to date the monument to his reign for other reasons (see below). It was thus gratifying to discover slim evidence that his name actually appeared in the last, broken case of AO 2679. Close examination shows that this case was deliberately hammered at in order to obliterate the signs there, and the stele fractured just at that point. One is led to assume that destruction of the monument was overseen or perpetrated by someone who could read it; otherwise, assuming this case did in fact have the royal name, the coincidence is a remarkable one. As is often the case with tablets, the stone broke along a wedge such that the top part of the case is left undamaged and the cleavage follows the upper profile of the sign. The trace fits uš well, and certainly cannot be the trace of any other Sargonic royal name but Rimuš. To the left of the trace there

is adequate room for *ri* and *mu* (see Fig. 5). The wedge points down to the right and ends at the faintest trace of a vertical, the head of which resembles closely the equally faint head of the *ta* sign just above it in the next case. To the left of the descending wedge are what appear to be traces of one or two small intersecting verticals. Thus if any royal name is to be restored here, it must be *Rimuš*.

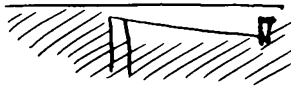


Fig. 5. Collation of *iv' x + 12'*.

IV. *The Relief* (AO 2678)

There is no reason to repeat Amiet's expert analysis here (above, note 3), but only to offer some additional suggestions of my own. Whereas Amiet and Börker-Klähn see in the relief a rather monotonous repetition of a standardized military triumphal repertory, it seems to me possible to "read" the relief as a coherent artistic presentation.

A peculiar feature of this relief is that the figures move from left to right on one side, and from right to left on the other, meaning that they move towards the same edge of the stele (in this reconstruction, towards Face D, the hypothetical end or beginning of the text). Although both faces of the relief are schematized in the same way, Face 2 has a feature that is not present on what is preserved of Face 1: a curious hollowing-out of the right side of the middle register such that the lance held by the right hand figure appears to cut into the top band, which actually begins to the left of the lance. While of course this was a practical necessity in order to represent the lance in upright position, it makes an excellent frame for a beginning such as is not found on the corresponding edge of Face 1. Whether or not this is deemed plausible, the hollowing-out has added significance: the remains of a precisely similar hollowing-out are plainly discernible to the right of the bottom preserved band of Face 2, just below the soldier's bow. This strongly suggests that there was yet another band of figures that is now wholly lost, and that this lost band had on its right side a figure carrying something tall enough to intrude into the frieze above it. Assuming another lance or a standard, one has here a dual offset of the four bands of relief on one side.

I propose to read the bands from the top down because of their internal logic and their apparent correlation with the subject matter of Sargonic royal inscriptions: march in the top band, battle and massacre in the second and third bands. The subject of the reconstructed fourth band could logically have been forced labor or destruction of city walls by the king. One may compare the quadripartite presentation of the early Sargonic royal inscriptions, for example *Rimuš* b2 (= *AfO* 20 [1963], 56 f.). These contain first a statement that there was a victorious campaign, second a record of killed and captured enemy, third a statement that city walls were destroyed, and finally a reference to enslavement in prison camps (*Rimuš* only). My proposal for the fourth band is reinforced slightly by the hollowing-out

noted above for Face 2 bottom right, as a figure holding a lance in upright position would be escorting prisoners as in Face 2 band 2.

Amiet (p. 26) has drawn attention to the anomaly of the short figure in Face 2 band 2, violating the isocephaly characteristic of the monumental art of the period. The reason for this, I suggest, is that the second band shows execution and capture of specific people, on the left an enemy ruler being smitten with a mace, and on the right a smaller figure intended to represent his son. Reference to the capture of families or households of opposing rulers can be found in the Sargonic royal inscriptions, e.g., Rimuš b 5 (= *AfO* 20 [1963], 61), the ensi's brother(?), and, most fully, albeit in fragmentary context, the capture of the royal court of Elam by Sargon (b 16. 36 ff. = *AfO* 20 [1963], 51–52). The naming of captured subordinates is known both earlier (Ur-Nanše)⁵ and later (Naram-Sin),⁶ as well as for the reign of Rimuš.⁷

This leads to the conclusion that the smiting figure in Face 2 is in fact the king himself, especially since Amiet has already drawn attention to the iconography of the foot placed on a vanquished enemy as a royal prerogative (Amiet, p. 26). The figure may wear a wide wrist band on the left arm, but the relief is too damaged for this to be certain. Naram-Sin wears such a wrist band on his victory stele.⁸ The iconography of Face 1, central band, is similar. Here is found another triumphal figure, in this case certainly wearing a wide wrist band on the right arm, here smiting a person who is standing, though offering no resistance. Do we have here another representation of the king? The archer behind him, unlike the archers on the march in the top band of Face 1, wears a distinctive pleated garment, as well as a wrist band, all suggesting some difference of rank between him and the other archers.⁹

The weaponry of the Sargonic period has been discussed by Amiet.¹⁰ We may note that the sculptor has deployed his figures so as to represent three “corps” of the army: archers, axe bearers, and spear bearers. Two such corps are actually referred to indirectly on the Obelisk of Maništusu, where corps commanders appear among the “Akkadian” witnesses to the purchase of land recorded there and are presumably beneficiaries of it: GĪR.NITA lú giš-gíd-da “general of the lancers”; GĪR.NITA lú giš-ti “general of the archers.”¹¹

In short, the relief has been carefully planned to portray at least two campaigns, in one of which the presumed enemy ruler is slain in battle, while in the other he is executed in the presence of his son, each presented as a personal triumph of the Sargonic king.¹² Besides the king, three types of soldiery are distributed evenly

⁵ *ABW*, Urn. 51; cf. Cooper, *SANE* 2/1 (1983), 13 and 44 f.

⁶ *UET* 1, 276 rev. iii(?). See B. Foster, “The Siege of Armanum,” *JANES* 14 (1982), 27–36.

⁷ Rimuš b5 viii 3 ff. = Hirsch, *AfO* 20 (1963), 61; cf. collations in Foster, *Umma in the Sargonic Period* (Hamden, 1982), 48 f.

⁸ This was first observed by Karen Polinger Foster and confirmed by Béatrice André-Leicknam who studied the monument with this in mind after my departure.

⁹ For garments in Akkadian art, see Strommenger, *Acta Praehistorica et Archaeologica* 2 (1971), 42 f., with reference to this stele.

¹⁰ *L'Art d'Agadé*, 25 f.; cf. Diakonoff, *Sumer*, 178 ff.

¹¹ *MO A* xii 5 f., 13 f.

¹² While there is nothing in the iconography of the smaller figure to suggest that he was a ruler, the Sargonic royal inscriptions attribute death or capture of opposing rulers to the king himself.

throughout the relief, marching and fighting. Read this way, the relief complements well the typical royal commemorative inscription of the period.

V. *Date of the Stele : Internal Evidence*

On stylistic grounds, art historians from Heuzey to Amiet have concurred in dating the relief to some point between the Sargon stele found at Susa and the victory stele of Naram-Sin (above, n. 3). The figures, though vigorous, seem stiff and lack the idealized corporality of "classical" Sargonic sculpture as exemplified in the Nineveh head or the Naram-Sin stele. In dynastic terms, this means that the stele should fall somewhere in the reigns of Rimuš or Maništusu, Strommenger's "Reichsakkadisch II/III."

This dating is of interest to the epigrapher. Precise dating of anonymous stone monuments is notoriously difficult, and inscribed monuments from the time of Rimuš or Maništusu are rare. On the basis of the copy by Thureau-Dangin, most epigraphers would probably have dated the inscription considerably later than either Rimuš or Maništusu, as the writing looks like standard, "classical" Sargonic tablet script. While dating on the basis of one epigraphic feature is risky, only one sign form of this script can help at the present state of knowledge: the configuration of the LUGAL sign.¹³

In fact, the development of the LUGAL sign in Sargonic monumental script is suggestive, and places the monument nearly where art historians would place it, as the following chart will show. I have collated all the pieces listed here, or in the case of multiple examples, at least one of the group.

a) Sargon Stele

Strommenger, *Mesopotamien*, Pl. 115 (caption to 114!). For another copy of the sign, see Nassouhi, *RA* 21 (1924), 66, where the curvature is exaggerated somewhat.



b) Victory Stele

Personal collation.



c) Rimuš vases

For bibliography, see Goetze, *JAOS* 88 (1968), 54.



d) Obelisk of Maništusu

Scheil, *MDP* 2 (1900), pl. 1-10.



e) Naram-Sin inscription from Telloh

Thureau-Dangin, *Dél. Chal.* LVII/2.



f) Šarkališarri brick stamp

Stephens, *ROS* 9 7.



a, c, d, e, f = "title" form; b, d = "non-title" form.

The LUGAL signs of the Sargon Stele and of the Victory Stele are characterized by a gently curving bottom horizontal, while later in the Sargonic period the bottom horizontal becomes more sharply curved. Curiously, the bottom horizontal remains straight in tablet script until the post-Sargonic period, when it tends to curve like the sign in Sargonic monumental script. Yet in formal Ur III writing (cf.

¹³ First mentioned by Heuzey, *RA* 3 (1893), 116, though the following argumentation is my own. Note

also the remarks of Hallo, *Royal Titles*, *AOS* 43 (1957), 23 f.

JCS 31 [1979], 241 no. 15) the bottom horizontal is straightened to look more "archaic." Thus the "archaic" form of the Sargonic sign was to become the Ur III cursive form, while the cursive form of the Sargonic sign was to become the Ur III "archaic" form.

Thureau-Dangin's copy of the LUGAL sign in AO 2679 shows the bottom horizontal as straight, and I suspect that it was this that led him to redate the monument to the time of Šarkališarri (*SAKI*, 171), to bring the LUGAL sign into conformity with the tablet script of the classical and late Sargonic period. An art historian would find such a dating unthinkable. But examination of the original shows that the ancient engraver made a slight error in executing the sign: he drew two horizontals, one straight, and one slightly curved, the latter presumably as a correction of the former. Careful examination of the left end of the horizontal with this problem in mind will show that, so far as it is preserved, it begins to rise again, just as on the Sargon stele, and is not absolutely straight as Thureau-Dangin's copy suggests. Therefore in this trifling instance the (then youthful) master's eye deceived him, as well as on the obverse, where he omitted the traces of two signs marked * in the transliteration above.

With regard to the engraver's slip, the carving on the relief seems much surer and finer than the execution of the characters, so one suspects that a master did the relief and an apprentice carved the inscription, the latter a simpler task.

One is struck by the fact that the LUGAL sign of the stele has but one close parallel in the whole corpus of Sargonic inscriptions on stone: the Sargon Stele. This confirms the early Sargonic dating for the stele against Thureau-Dangin's late dating. Since no other inscriptions from the period offer further palaeographic clues, nothing further can be said beyond a statement that epigraphy favours an early Sargonic dating for the piece. For exact placement of it, external historical considerations must be adumbrated.

VI. *Historical Interpretation of the Stele*

Considering the nature of the relief and the inscription together, one may next inquire what this stele was intended to commemorate. The pictorial representations clearly suggest a successful military campaign with slaughtering and enslavement of captives. The preserved text makes no mention of military matters, but lists tracts of land situated in the Lagash region with personal names or titles associated with them.

Other Sargonic stone monuments having to do with land are records of the purchase of large tracts of real estate, in some cases by the king, the purpose of the stone being to preserve a permanent record of an important transaction that was itself to be considered permanent.¹⁴ The texts on such stones consist of the area sold, the purchase price, the purchaser, the sellers, and the witnesses. They do not have pictorial representations.

It is obvious that the "Victory Stele" is a different sort of monument from these.

¹⁴ The two best known examples are the Maništusu Obelisk (= Scheil, *MDP* 2 (1900), 1 ff.) and the Sippar stone (= Gelb, *RSO* 32 (1957), 83 ff.). For general

remarks on monuments of this type, see Gelb, *Studi in Onore di Eduardo Volterra* (Rome, 1969), 6: 137-154.

The format of the text, tracts of land followed by personal names, is, however, well known to students of third millennium administrative records of land.¹⁵ These list tracts, their locations, and the people who held them or to whom the land was assigned. The two major differences between these records and the text of the stele are first that the land records are all clay tablets, and, second, that the total area recorded in the stele (but not the parcels) dwarfs any total area recorded on clay tablets by a factor of twenty-one (see below).

The difference between clay and stone is surely significant, as stone suggests a permanent transaction of great importance,¹⁶ while the administrative records on clay refer to conditional, temporary, allocations of institutionally owned land.¹⁷ The conclusion can only be that the tracts of land recorded in the stele were bestowed permanently on the officials and untitled people mentioned there.

As for the question of the areas involved, they are indeed large in the aggregate, but singly are readily paralleled or exceeded by areas found in administrative records of land from approximately the same region and period, as the following table illustrates :

<i>Stele</i>	<i>Girsu Administrative Texts</i>
x + 2201 (iv')	2400 : <i>ITT</i> V, 6673, Donbaz-Foster, <i>STTI</i> 20 L. 1176, 65 L. 5856, 182 L. 9441
7200 (iii')	7200 : Donbaz-Foster, <i>STTI</i> , 83 L. 2950
x + 10,960 (ii')	10,800 : Donbaz-Foster, <i>STTI</i> , 163 L. 5824, 182 L. 9441
18,000 (iii')	18,000 : <i>ITT</i> I, 1400, <i>ITT</i> V, 6672 ; Donbaz-Foster, <i>STTI</i> 48 L. 1366, 172 L. 9336
x + 108,000 (ii')	116,200 : Donbaz-Foster, <i>STTI</i> , 32 L. 1246 (nin dingir)
	118,800 : Donbaz-Foster, <i>STTI</i> , 14 L. 1152 (Yeṭib-Mer)

Average : 29,272 on stele

Average parcels from Girsu administrative texts : ¹⁸

cultic personnel :	39,614 sar
administrative, court, supervisory :	17,402
professional :	7,620
untitled :	7,399

From these figures it is clear that the individual figures of the stele are typical of parcels of land held by privileged people in the Girsu region during the Sargonic period. Their average, 29,272 sar, falls between the average for areas held by cultic personnel and administrative, court, and supervisory personnel, and is higher than the average of all these categories in the aggregate (18,008).

While the individual figures compare with administrative reality of the time and place, the total is without parallel. 379,705 1/4 iku equals about 133,960 hectares. The next largest figure that can be compared with it from Sargonic sources is found

¹⁵ Foster, *Copenhagen Studies in Assyriology* 9 (1982).

¹⁶ Exceptions are mere curiosities ; see Gelb, *Festschrift Johannes Friedrich* (Heidelberg, 1959), 183 ff.; Foster, *JANES* 6 (1974), 84 note 32.

¹⁷ See note 15.

¹⁸ See note 15.

in *BIN* 8 198: 17,676 iku (collated)¹⁹ = approximately 6236.09 hectares of land assigned to a sag-sug₅, or cadaster official. Thus the land itemized in the stele exceeds any total known elsewhere from the time and region by a factor of twenty-one, and, would, if square and contiguous, be a parcel about 36 km on a side, more than enough to hold seventeen towns and eight villages.

VII. *Historical Context of the Stele*

Summarizing the main points established thus far, (1) a military victory, (2) permanent transfer of large areas of land to people in an aggregate figure without parallel from administrative sources, (3) a date early in the Sargonic period, either late in the reign of Sargon or early in the reign of Rimuš, can one date the inscription more precisely? Campaigns against the Lagash region are mentioned by both Sargon and Rimuš, as follows: ²⁰ é-^dNIN.MAR.KI e-hul bàd-bi e-ga-[si] gú-kalam-bi Lagaš^{ki}-ta a-ab-ba-šè na-am*-NE e-hul "He (Sargon) smote E-Ninkimara and wrecked its wall; its surrounding territory (and) from Lagash to the sea, whatever there was, he destroyed."²¹

The evidence from Rimuš' reign is as follows: at his accession, there was a widespread revolt in Sumer involving Ur, Umma, and Uruk, as well as Kazallu and Lagash. This rebellion was suppressed with unexampled ferocity: tens of thousands were killed, captured, or put into concentration camps.²² The suppression was so complete that Sumer did not revolt again in his reign, and Rimuš was free to go on extensive campaigns in Iran (to which most of his extant inscriptions refer), and his successors were able, in due course, to continue in Iran (Maništusu) and later to the northwest and Syria (Naram-Sin).

Lagash is referred to briefly: Ki-tuš-íd ÉNSI Lagaš^{ki} šU DU₈.A ù URU.KI-su-ni SAG GIŠ.RA ù BÀD-su-ni Ì.GUL.GUL ù in URU.KI-su-ni 5985 GURUŠ.GURUŠ u-su-zi-am-ma a-na kà-ra-si-im iš-kùn "He (Rimuš) captured Kituš-id the ruler of Lagash and smote their (i.e., KA-kù of Ur and Kituš-id of Lagash) cities and destroyed their walls, and he brought 5985 men out of their cities and put them in a (concentration) camp."²³ A defeat of Girsu is specifically mentioned in a dedicatory inscription from Nippur: ì-nu Gír-[su^{ki}] en-a-[ra-am] "When he (Rimuš) defea[ted] Gír[su]."²⁴

The historical evidence is in favour of dating the stele to the reign of Rimuš. First, the campaign of Sargon was presumably early in his reign, and epigraphically and artistically it is impossible to date the stele early in the reign of Sargon. Second, a dating to the reign of Rimuš fits well with the references to slaughter and capture of POW's in his historical inscriptions commemorating his campaign in Sumer, because these activities are actually represented on the relief. Furthermore, Amiet has

¹⁹ This belongs to the Me-ság archive, for which see Foster, *ZA* 72 (1982), 6. This comes from a site between Umma and Lagash, but within Lagash province; see S. J. Bridges, *The Mesag Archive: A Study of Sargonic Society and Economy* (dissertation, Yale University, 1981). The figures should read: (1) 1,080,000 + 108,000 LAL (2 × 1800)/(2) (2 × 18,000) + (4 × 1800)/(3) (5 × 108,000)/(4) 1,080,000 + (6 × 108,000) + [2] × 18,000 + [1800].

²⁰ Sargon b 1.41 ff. (Sumerian) = Hirsch, *Afo* 20

(1963), 35 (collated); cf. also Sargon b 4.26 f. = Hirsch, *Afo* 20 (1963), 40.

²¹ Cf. Sargon b 1.41 ff. (Akkadian) = Hirsch, *Afo* 20 (1963), 35.

²² Foster, *Umma*, 47 ff.; Westenholz, *Afo* 23 (1970), 27-31.

²³ Rimuš b 2.32 ff. = Hirsch, *Afo* 20 (1963), 56 (collated). Note that two rulers are mentioned as, I have argued, portrayed on this stele.

²⁴ Goetze, *JAOS* 88 (1968), 54.

pointed out that the defeated figures have the iconography of native Mesopotamians, not foreigners.²⁵ The epigraphic evidence was in favour of a dating early in the reign of Rimuš, before the preparation of the stone vases.

Taking a closer look at the Rimuš inscriptions, and comparing them to the major events of his reign as he himself commemorated them at Nippur and elsewhere, one finds the following :

Rimuš (reigned nine years)

	<i>Source</i>
early phase : campaigns in Sumer against Adab, Zabala, KĪ.AN, Umma, Lagash, Ur to Gulf, Kazallu on return march.	Rimuš b 1-5
later phase : campaigns in Iran : Barahsi, Zahara, Elam	b 7, 10, 11 ; stone vases, maceheads

All of the existing Rimuš inscriptions in stone date to the “later phase” above, and all of them contain the LUGAL sign with the more sharply curved horizontal, just as in the succeeding reigns of Maništusu and Naram-Sin. Therefore historical background and epigraphy converge precisely and require a date early in the reign of Rimuš for the “victory stele.” The dating to his reign agrees with the trace of the royal name, if such it is. Moreover, one may suggest that it is Rimuš’ accession that is referred to in the text, proof positive that our inscription dates to early in the reign. Since the stele records a victory over the Lagash region, as is known from other inscriptions of this king, that will explain why the monument was erected in or near Girsu, the administrative centre of Lagash.

One may further suggest that one of Rimuš’ punitive measures was an extensive redistribution of land to his followers in the province of Lagash. Since this land was spoils of war, no purchase was called for, such as Maništusu made in Marad when he acquired land for his retainers.²⁶ The dating proposed here can explain as well why none of the people listed in the stele can be identified in administrative records from Girsu, despite their importance as land holders. This is because all the extant Girsu archives seem to date to the reigns of Naram-Sin and Šarkališarri.

One final point : The redistribution of large areas of land, placed under the control of the Sargonic royal establishment, can explain why the areas of land assigned in the later Sargonic administrative records from Girsu are, on average, significantly larger than areas of land from comparable records elsewhere in Sumer.²⁷ The fragmentation of land resources so typical of earlier Sumerian land administration was offset by a Sargonic, Akkadian procedure of assigning large tracts to privileged people, from which smaller tracts were measured off for their retainers.²⁸

Hereby the “victory stele” from Telloh can be anchored both historically and

²⁵ Amiet, *L'Art d'Agadé*, 26.

²⁶ For discussion of the historical significance of the Obelisk, see Diakonoff, *Sumer*, 69 ff., 230 ; Tyumenev, *VDI* 1946, No. 4, 33 ff., the latter effectively refuted by

the former.

²⁷ Foster, *op. cit.*, n. 15, 110.

²⁸ Foster, *ZA* 72 (1982), 22 f. ; *op. cit.* note 15, *passim*.

artistically at a turning point in the fortunes of Lagash. The city-state became thereafter a centre of Sargonic royal economic interests based on huge tracts of expropriated land, and served perhaps as a seat of regional government as well.²⁹ With the collapse of dynastic power at Agade at the end of the reign of Šarkališarri, Lagash was therefore in a better position than all the other Sumerian cities to emerge powerful and prosperous in the period that followed, and this, if we believe the account of Gudea, is just what occurred.

Appendix I: Dimensions

AO 2678

maximum height	345 mm
maximum width	259 mm
thickness at top	110 mm
thickness at base of top band	100 mm
thickness at bottom	120 mm

AO 2679

maximum height	285 mm
maximum width (bottom)	295 mm
maximum thickness	109 mm

YBC 2409

maximum height	197 mm
maximum width	145 mm
maximum thickness	110 mm
diameter of door socket at top	105 mm

Appendix II: Mineralogical Analysis of Fragments from AO 2679 and YBC 2409

By H. Catherine W. Skinner

The macroscopic appearance of the two rock fragments examined is similar, a conclusion which was upheld on microscopic (thin section) analysis.

The samples were embedded in Spurr Plastic, dried at 25 °C under vacuum and the resulting blocks cut with a diamond-bladed saw to produce thin sections. The sections were mounted on glass slides and ground to a uniform thickness of approximately 25 μ . A Leitz Ortholux polarizing microscope with a range of magnifications was employed to study the sections.

At 25 \times magnification the rock slices appeared whitish grey and were composed of fine-grained rather uniform particles. Occasional larger yellowish grains and flecks of black material were noted.

At 100 \times magnification the very high birefringence of the individual uniform grains was discerned. Upon rotation of the microscope stage under crossed polars, patches of larger size, composed of either larger grains or aggregates of several grains, exhibited sharp uniform extinction. Veinlets cross-cutting the generally uniform granular section were also observed. Discrimination of the veinlets and patches depended on the alignment of the section relative to the polarization direction of the microscope. There was no discernible difference in the character of the mineral in the uniform groundmass and that in the veinlets and patches aside from grain size. No cement or matrix was observed between individual grains.

²⁹ M. Lambert, *OrAn* 13 (1974), 1 ff.; *RSO* 49 (1975), 159 ff.

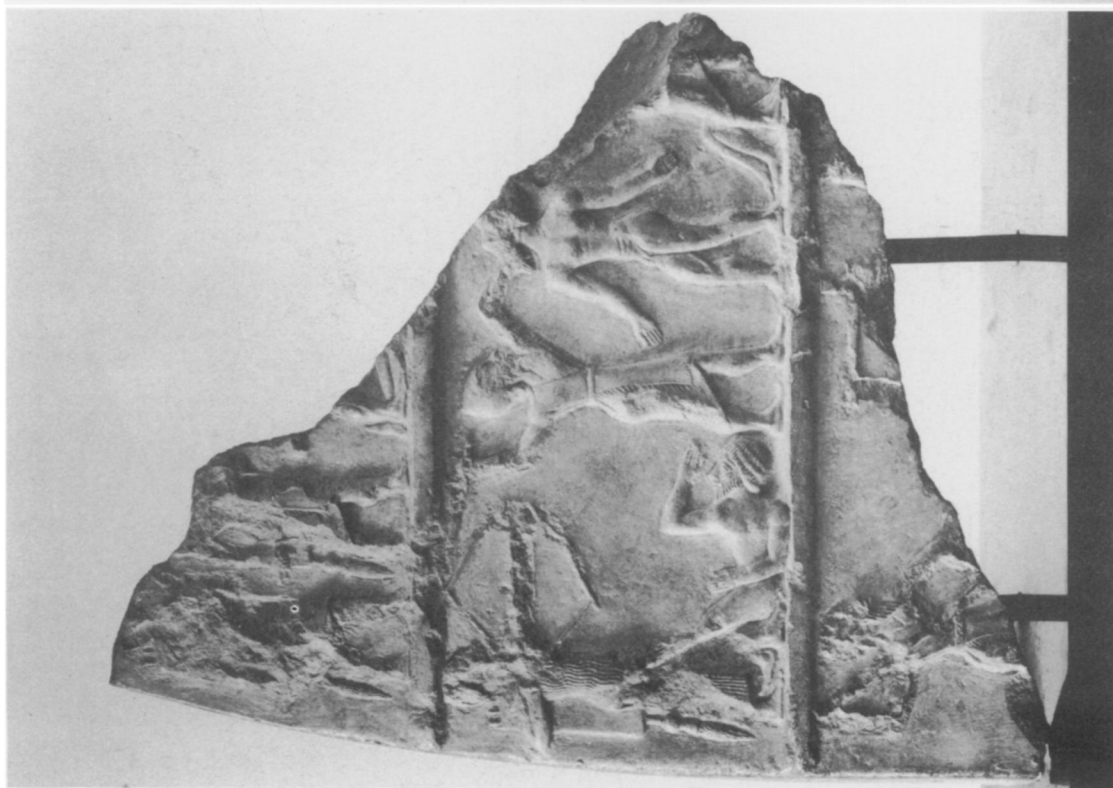
At 500 × magnification each of the grains in the uniform groundmass was seen as an irregular or shard-like particle. No matrix or cement was detected adhering or interspersed between the grains.

From the microscopic examination of the sections of the two fragments they appear indistinguishable, essentially identical. Both are composed of exceedingly fine-grained, microcrystalline material, probably the mineral calcite, with occasional isolated grains of quartz and carbonaceous material (black flecks). The shard-like appearance of the grains at the highest magnification indicates that the particles are most likely chemical precipitates (rather than biochemical or biological pellets, for example) and in the early stages of diagenesis. The patches (spar) and veinlets represent the recrystallization of material perhaps under conditions of solution and redeposition. In any case an appropriate name for this type of rock would be "limestone micrite", the latter modifier indicating the small particle size.

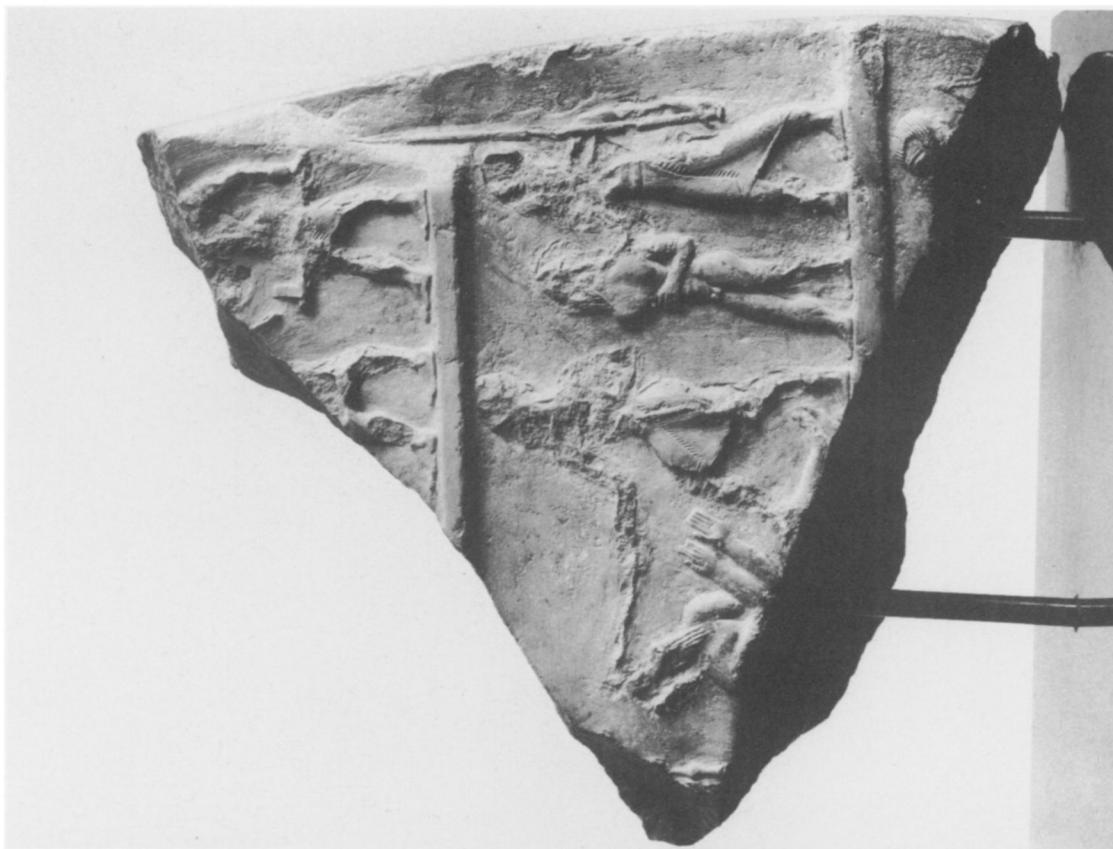
An X-ray powder diffraction pattern was obtained on the samples and confirmed the crystalline nature of the material and specifically enabled us to identify the mineral species as calcite. No other mineral species were detected in the X-ray analysis, hence other mineral components, quartz, for example, are probably present in less than 3% of the total. Analysis of the position of the diffraction maxima in the pattern suggests that the calcite probably contains some magnesium. This slight chemical change probably accounts for the relative stability of the samples when submitted to testing with HCl in spite of the very fine grain size of the individual particles. In light of these additional tests one might more accurately designate the rock type of these samples as a magnesian calcite micrite limestone.

In summary, there is no obvious discernible difference between the two fragments of rock examined by high magnification polarizing microscopy and both should be most appropriately called "limestone". It is quite likely that the two samples could be fragments from one larger block as suggested herein, although clearly it is possible that the material for two stelae could have been quarried from the same locality or, alternatively, other limestone localities quarried for monumental stone might closely resemble one another. Further analysis, such as spectroscopic analysis to establish the chemical signature of the two fragments, that might eliminate these alternatives, seems unwarranted at this time.

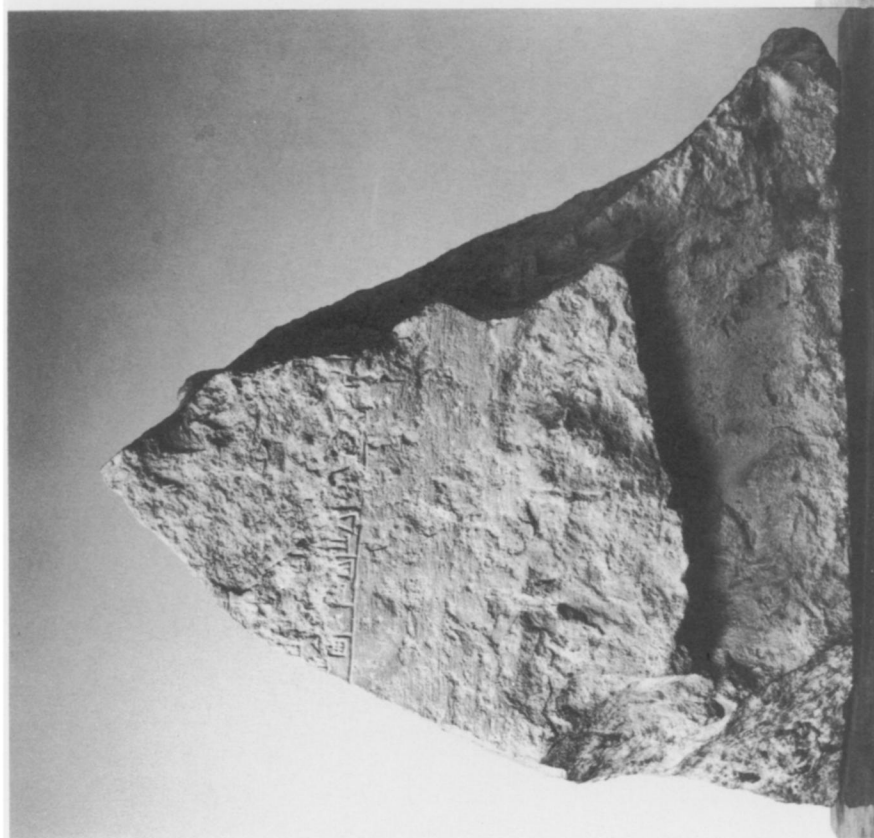
PLATE II



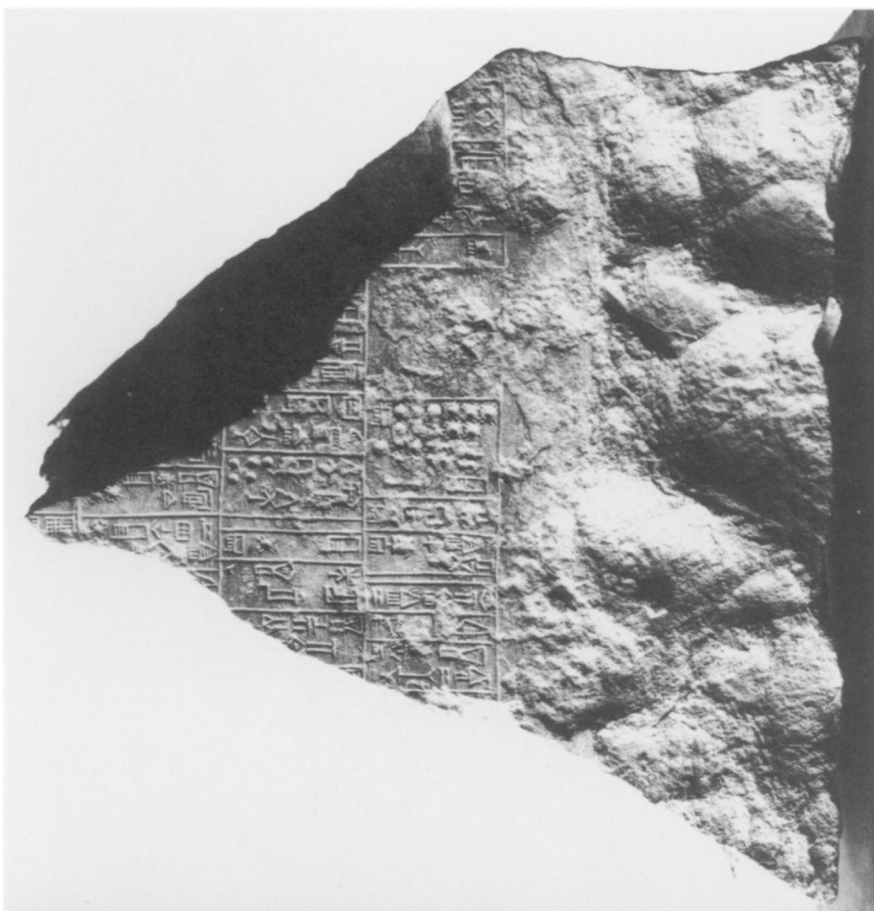
a. AO 2678, Face 1 (Photo courtesy Louvre).



b. AO 2678, Face 2 (Photo courtesy Louvre).

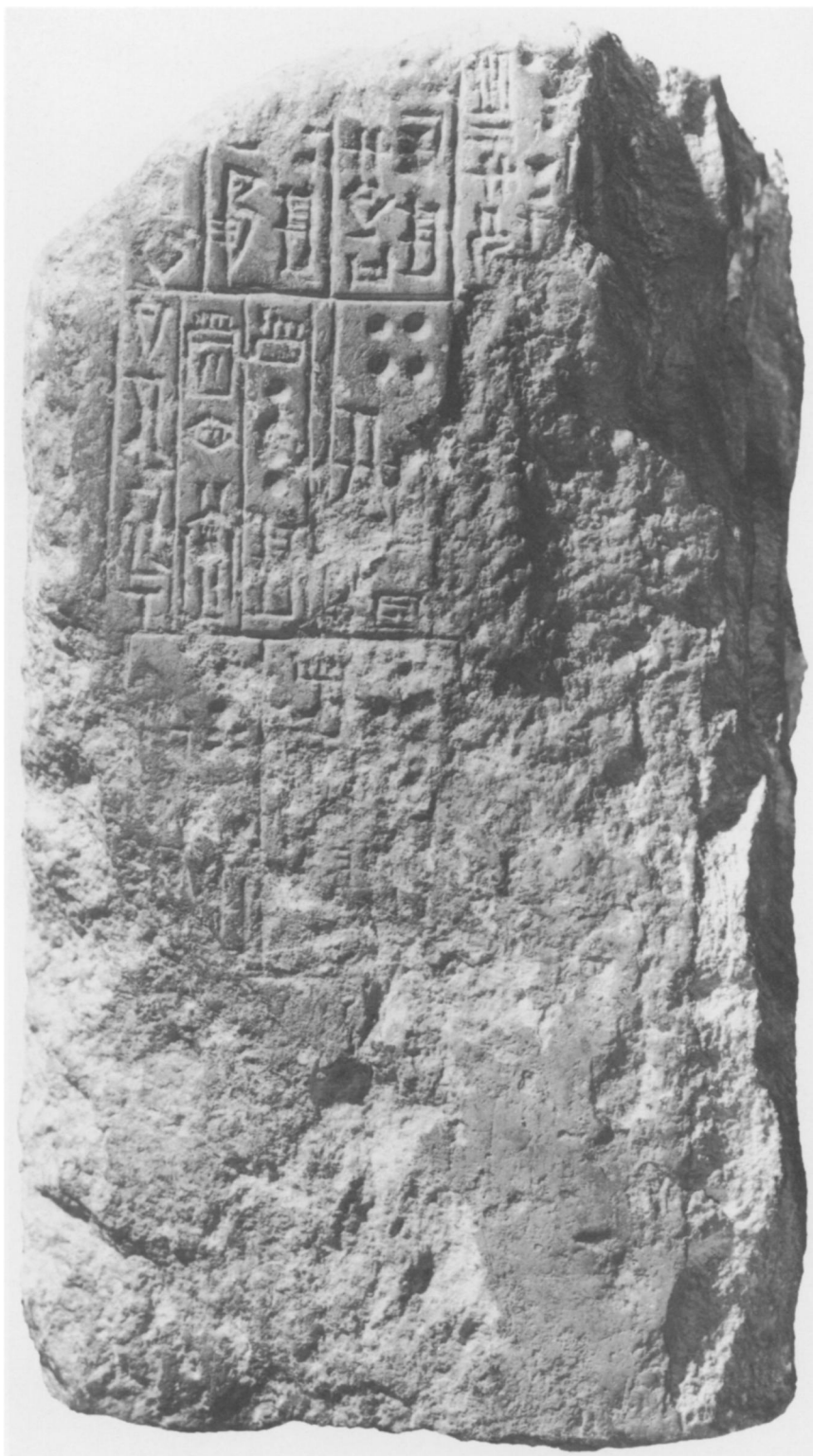


a. AO 2679, Face A (Photo courtesy Louvre).



b. AO 2679, Face C (Photo courtesy Louvre).

PLATE IV



YBC 2409, Face B (Photo courtesy Yale Babylonian Collection).