

## Abhandlung

Sajjad Alibaigi\*, John MacGinnis, Nicole Brisch, Louis D. Levine, Iraj Rezaei, Behnam Ghanbari

# Sargon II in the Mahidasht: New Evidence from Quwakh Tapeh, Kermanshah

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**Abstract:** The eastward expansion of Assyria, richly narrated in official inscriptions and supported by corollary materials such as letters from the royal correspondence and oracular enquiries, remains in archaeological terms hugely under-explored. Over the past few years, however, this has begun to change and a succession of recent discoveries is starting to give us an increasingly more detailed picture of the imprint of Assyrian rule in this sector of the Empire. The two fragments of a monumental stele of Sargon II published here, excavated at the site of Quwakh Tapeh in the Mahidasht Plain, are an example of just the sort of find that is ushering in a new era in our understanding of the Assyrian presence in western Iran.

## 1 Introduction

The Assyrian presence in western Iran has been known from Mesopotamian cuneiform sources in the form of royal inscriptions and royal correspondence since the second half of the nineteenth century. Yet archaeological corroboration of this presence from Iran itself has been a long time in the making.<sup>1</sup> The first step in the story was the discovery of the remains of a monumental building of unquestionable Assyrian type in the excavations at Tapeh Giyan carried out

by Contenau and Ghirshman in 1931 and 1932 (Contenau/Ghirshman 1935; Reade 1995). Unfortunately, that building was badly damaged and could not be explored as thoroughly as would have been desirable, and it remains the case that even today, almost a hundred years on, there has still been no scientific excavation of an Assyrian site in Iran. As will be seen, there are grounds for being optimistic that this may soon change.

The evidence from Tapeh Giyan remained in isolation for several decades, until a remarkable string of discoveries in the 1960s and 1970s. This started with the stele of Sargon II found at Najafehabad in 1965 (Levine 1972, 25 f.; Frame 2013) and the stele of Tiglath-pileser III purportedly found in Luristan some time prior to 1967 (Levine 1972; Herrero 1973; Tadmor/Yamada 2011, 80–87 No.35), followed by the discovery of the rock relief of Sargon II at Tang-i Var in 1968 (Sarfaraz 1968; Frame 1999, 2013; Frame 2021, 438–443) and then a second rock relief dating to the reign of Esarhaddon or Ashurbanipal at Eshkaft-e Gulgul in 1972 (van der Spek 1975; Grayson/Levine 1975; Reade 1977: the relief has hitherto, but erroneously, been referred to as Shikaft-i Gulgul in western literature). The excavations at Hasanlu (1956–1974) yielded an inventory of both Assyrian imports and locally produced Assyrianizing objects (alongside equally strong influence from the Caucasus), including a bowl and a mace head inscribed in cuneiform (Dyson/Piggott 1975, 183; Winter 1977, 378; Dyson/Voigt 1989; Cifarelli 2013, 2018; Danti/Cifarelli 2016; Danti/Danti in preparation); there were also occasional small finds such as the bronze head of Pazuzu from Nush-i Jan (Stronach 1969, 16; Muscarella 1987, 123; Curtis 2005, 235) and the bronze plaque of Šilirsuh (Herzfeld 1930, 117; Herzfeld 1938; Diakonoff 1978).

<sup>1</sup> For previous summaries of the archaeological evidence for the Assyrians in Iran see Curtis (2001), Radner (2013), MacGinnis (2016, 10–11). For studies on the historical geography of western Iran in Assyrian texts, see Levine (1973; 1974a); Reade (1978; 1995); Radner (2003; 2013); Alibaigi (2017; 2019); Alibaigi/Aminikhah/Fatahi (2016); Alibaigi/MacGinnis (2018); Alibaigi/Rezaei (2018), as well as other studies referred to below.

\*Corresponding author: **Sajjad Alibaigi**, Department of Archaeology, Razi University, Kermanshah, Iran; Email: [sadjadalibaigi@gmail.com](mailto:sadjadalibaigi@gmail.com).  
Orcid ID 0000-0002-8258-7436

**John MacGinnis**, McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, Cambridge University, Cambridge, UK; Email: [johnmacginnis@aol.com](mailto:johnmacginnis@aol.com).  
Orcid ID 0000-0002-8381-3503

**Nicole Brisch**, Department of Cross-Cultural and Regional Studies (ToRS), University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen, Denmark; Email: [nmbrisch@hum.ku.dk](mailto:nmbrisch@hum.ku.dk)

**Louis D. Levine**, University of Toronto (retd.); Email: [levinelou@gmail.com](mailto:levinelou@gmail.com)

**Iraj Rezaei**, Sar Pol-e Zahab, Kermanshah, Iran; Email: [iraj.rezaie@gmail.com](mailto:iraj.rezaie@gmail.com)

**Behnam Ghanbari**, Department of Archaeology, Islamic Azad University, Abhar Branch, Zanjan, Iran; Email: [aryanbehnam@gmail.com](mailto:aryanbehnam@gmail.com).  
Orcid ID 0000-0003-2595-3142

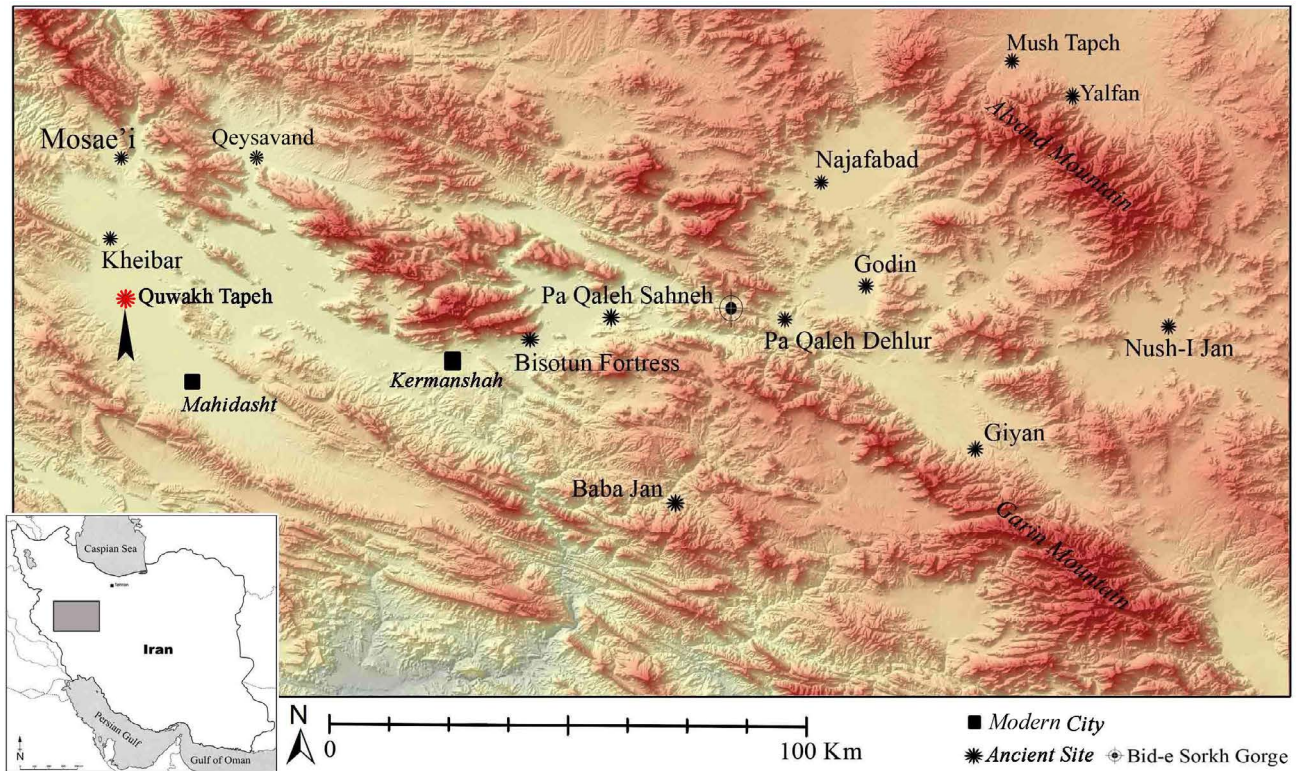


Fig. 1: Map by Saman Heydari-Guran showing the location of places mentioned in the text

## 2 Surveys in the Mahidasht

The first archaeological evaluations of the Mahidasht took place in 1934, when Schmidt (with the assistance of George C. Miles) carried out a reconnaissance of the southern and northern parts of the plain (Schmidt 1940, 46), while Stein surveyed the western part, carrying out soundings at a number of the sites, including Tapeh Kheibar (Stein 1940, 415–417). The next inspection came in 1959–1960, when Braidwood visited the region in the course of the Iranian Prehistoric Project (Braidwood 1960a, 1960b, 1961; Braidwood [e. a.] 1961). The first systematic survey in the Mahidasht was conducted by Ali Akbar Sarfaraz in 1968. In 1975 and 1978 Lou Levine began a planned long-term project in Kermanshah province with two seasons of archaeological survey, one of whose intended goals was the exploration of the Assyrian presence in central western Iran (Levine 1974b; 1976a; 1976b). The results attest to a large increase in settled population in the Iron III period. In all, 73 sites were found, and these, unlike the large number of sites reported in earlier periods, are to be fitted into two or three centuries. It must also be noted that some of these sites are very large, with one, for example, covering approximately sixty hectares. Buff wares whose shapes are known from Godin, Baba Jan and Nush-i Jan are well represented, although

they are usually in a chaff tempered ware that is not as well made as the samples known from excavation. On a number of sites imports from Assyria, such as the Late Assyrian beaker, were found (Levine 1976a, 161). Among the interesting features of the Iron Age III site distribution in the Mahidasht is the extent to which it does not overlap that of the earlier Iron Age. Only six of the earlier Iron I–II sites are reoccupied in Iron III times, indicating a significant break in the settlement patterns, and by analogy, in the social organization from Iron II to Iron III times (Levine, 1976a, 290). In contrast, there appears to be a smooth transition to the following Achaemenid-Seleucid (Iron IV) period, with many of the sites continuing to be occupied. The pottery assemblage is closely derivative from that of the Iron III, but includes painted ware in both Festoon ware and Triangle ware styles.<sup>2</sup>

Following the Islamic revolution in early 1979 it was not possible to continue the work of the Mahidasht project, initiating a second hiatus in the search for the Assyrians in Iran. But, after an interlude of two decades, investigations

<sup>2</sup> Levine 1974b, 489–490. Triangle Ware is now generally accepted to date to the Achaemenid period (Dyson 1999a; 1999b), and Festoon Ware to the Seleucid and early Parthian period (Alibaigi 2014).



**Fig. 2:** The site of Quwakh Tapeh looking south (photograph by Reza Azizi)

on a broader scale resumed, with surveys carried out in the Mahidasht by Abbas Motarjem in 1998, Yousef Moradi in 2003, Shahin Kermajani in 2004, Abbas Rezaeinia in 2007 and Maryam Dehghan in 2008. A new wave of interest in the Assyrians in Iran was ushered in by the discovery of the unincised rock relief at Mishkhas in 2009 (Alibaigi [e. a.] 2012).<sup>3</sup> This has been accompanied by a steady accumulation of Assyrian (or Assyrianising) artefacts coming to light in the region (see Danti/Cifarelli 2016), including ceramics (Amelirad [e. a.] 2017, 194, fig. 33: 1–5), glazed bottles (Vanden Berghe/Tourovets 1995; Hassanzadeh 2016), glazed tiles (Hassanzadeh 2006; Afifi/Heydari 2010; Hassanzadeh/Mollasalehi 2011), bronze bath tub coffins (Alibaigi/Khosravi 2016; cf. Wicks 2015), bronze beakers<sup>4</sup> and seals;<sup>5</sup> one may add to this a silver bucket with an inscription of Esarhaddon among the materials recovered in 1989 believed to come

from Kalma Kareh cave in south Luristan (Bashash Kanzaq 1997). On the architectural side, the pebbled mosaiced pavements at Tapeh Rabat, 165 km northwest of Sanandaj, may be added to this list (Heydari 2007; Kargar/Binandeh 2009; Reade/Finkel 2014; Bunnens 2016). These discoveries have led to re-assessments of both the material record and the cuneiform texts,<sup>6</sup> with the results feeding into new surveys and new excavation projects actively informed about, and even geared to, the Assyrian occupation of the Iranian Zagros. In this context we make particular mention of the work at Tapeh Kheibar (Alibaigi [e. a.] 2016; Alibaigi/Brisch 2019; Alibaigi [e. a.] 2021), and, now, Quwakh Tapeh (Alibaigi/MacGinnis 2022).<sup>7</sup>

It is against this background that we present the new discoveries reported here.

### 3 The site of Quwakh Tapeh

Quwakh Tapeh (Fig. 2) is located 43 km west of Kermanshah and 4.5 km southeast of the small town of Kouzaran. The

<sup>3</sup> Whether the piece of green schist from Lake Zeribar recently published by Radner [e. a.] (2020) is indeed a cuneiform inscription may be open to some doubt.

<sup>4</sup> From Zalu Ab graveyard (Godard 1933; Overlaet 2003) and Serrez of Kamyaran (Amelirad/Razmpoush 2015, 212, fig. 5).

<sup>5</sup> From Changbar graveyard near Ziwiye (Tala'i 2012; Ascalone/Baseri 2014); Kolâšeg in Gilan-e Gharb (Mohammadifar [e. a.] 2014, 44, fig. 14); Qareh Tapeh of Sagzabad (Dehpahlavan/Alinezhad 2022); the Zagros graveyard of Sanandaj (Towhidi/Azarshab 2014, 120); and the Qazvin plain (Saed Mucheshi 2015).

<sup>6</sup> For example, Alibaigi (2017); Alibaigi/MacGinnis (2018); Alibaigi/Rezaei (2018); MacGinnis (2020a).

<sup>7</sup> Quwakh (or Qawakh) Tapeh is the local name for the site; in official documents it may be found in the turkified form Qabaq/Qobaq Tapeh.



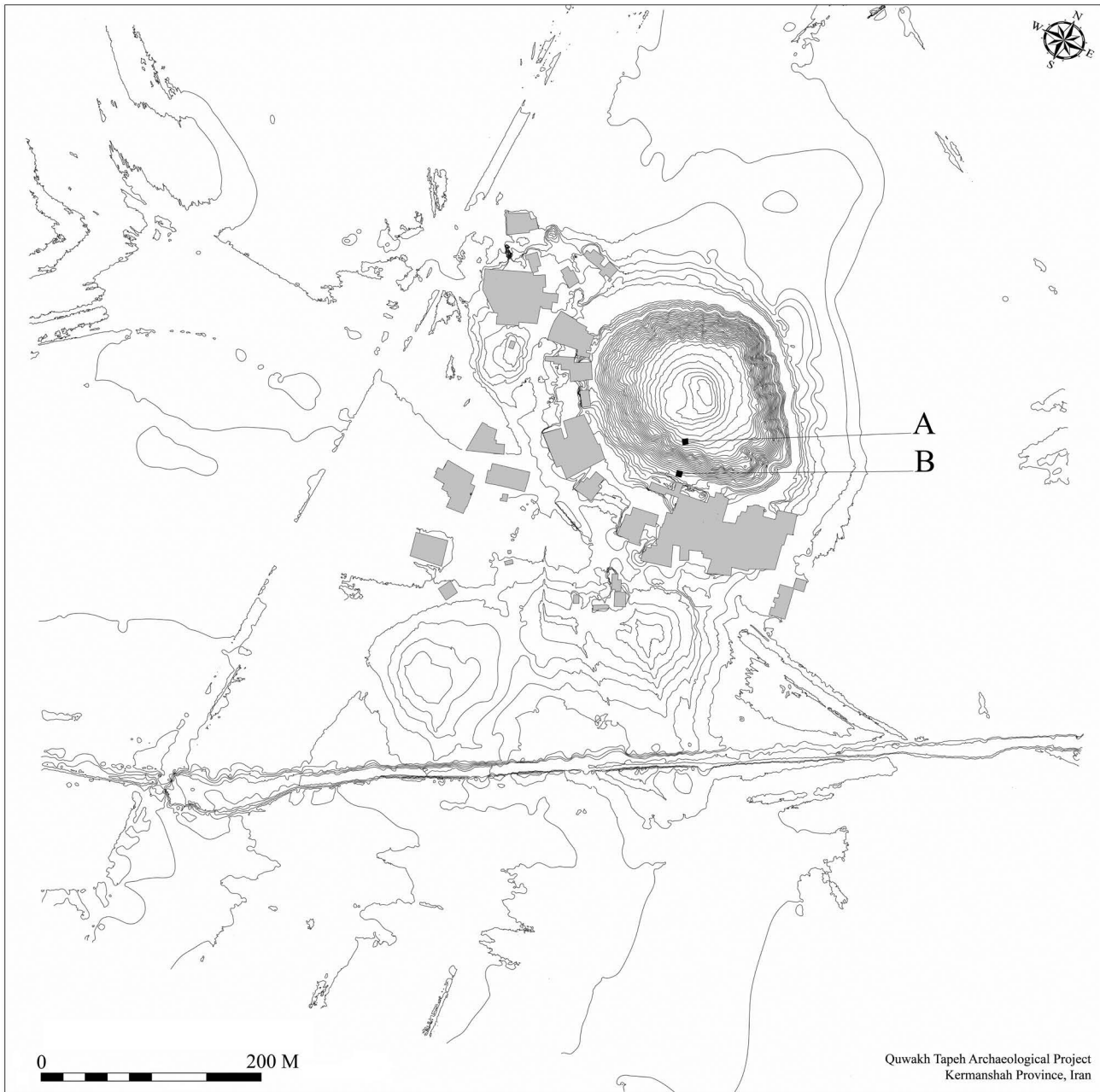
**Fig. 3:** Door socket from a monumental building in the Neo-Assyrian style (photograph by Sajjad Alibaigi)

main mound measures 330 m long by 220 m wide and rises 15 m above the surrounding plain. There are numerous other low elevations in the immediate vicinity indicating that the site as a whole covers an area of approximately 500 × 500 m, i. e. 25 hectares. The existence of a canal in the eastern part of the mound and a dried-up spring to the southwest serve to show the availability of water in the area. Quwakh Tapeh was first identified by Schmidt in his 1934 survey and the location of the site is indicated in one of the maps in ‘Flights over Ancient Cities of Iran’ (Schmidt 1940, map 4, after p.78). The site was subsequently surveyed and visited by Stein (1940, 416) and then re-examined by Ali Akbar Sarfaraz together with Mohammadrahim Sarraf and Ehsan Yaqmaei in their surveys of the Mahidasht plain in 1968 (Sarfaraz/Yaqmaei 1968, 52–54), leading to its registration as site number 865 in the National Heritage List of Iran on July 10th 1969. While Stein and Schmidt did little more than list the site with its name and location, Sarfaraz, and his colleagues noted the presence of ceramics from the Pre-historic, Median, Parthian and Sasanian periods.<sup>8</sup> In 1998 Abbas Motarjem visited Quwakh Tapeh in the course of his work in the Kouzaran plain, noting the abundance of

Parthian ceramics over a large part of the site and attributing it to the Parthian period accordingly (Motarjem 1998). The next important step came in 2019, when Sajjad Alibaigi visited the site and made the discovery of part of the upper cover of a monumental door-socket of apparently Neo-Assyrian type (Alibaigi [e. a.] 2021; Alibaigi/MacGinnis 2022) (Fig.3).

In order to acquire further information about the site and to gain an understanding of its stratigraphy, particularly with regard to the Iron Age occupations, in April 2021 a four-week programme of field investigations was commenced under the supervision of Alibaigi. During this period two 3 × 3 m test trenches were excavated in the southern part of the mound, the location chosen because this was where, following information supplied by local inhabitants, the Neo-Assyrian door-socket had been found (Figs. 4, 5). Trench A, which was sited at the top of the southern part of the mound, revealed remains of the Iron Age, Parthian and Sasanian periods; while the remains in Trench B, located half-way down the slope, were related to the Kassite period (mid second millennium BC). There were in addition some substantial mudbrick walls together with some surfaces (including rubble paving) which were probably associated but for which the dating has not yet been established.

<sup>8</sup> “Median” in this contexts refers to the Iron Age III.



**Fig. 4:** Plan by Reza Azizi of the site of Quwakh Tapeh showing the location of trenches

During the excavation in Trench A part of a broken Neo-Assyrian stele was found (Fig. 6). We refer to this as Fragment 1, and with the siglum QTT 1 (for Quwakh Tapeh Texts). This piece was discovered in a secondary context dating to the Parthian/Sasanian period and exposed when excavating a pit which cut through this context. At the lowest level of the pit, and almost on its floor, was a stone base which may belong to the stele from which Fragment 1 derives. It seems that these two pieces must have been located near each other when the pit was dug. The proxim-

ity of these two pieces suggested that further pieces might lie nearby, so the decision was made to expand the sounding to a  $5 \times 3$  m trench, an action rapidly justified by the discovery of another piece of inscribed stele, Fragment 2 (QTT 2). This piece was also found in a secondary context of Sasanian date, in this case re-used as building material.



Fig. 5: Aerial view taken by Reza Azizi of the site of Quwakh Tapeh showing the location of trenches



Fig. 6: The stela fragments in their archaeological contexts



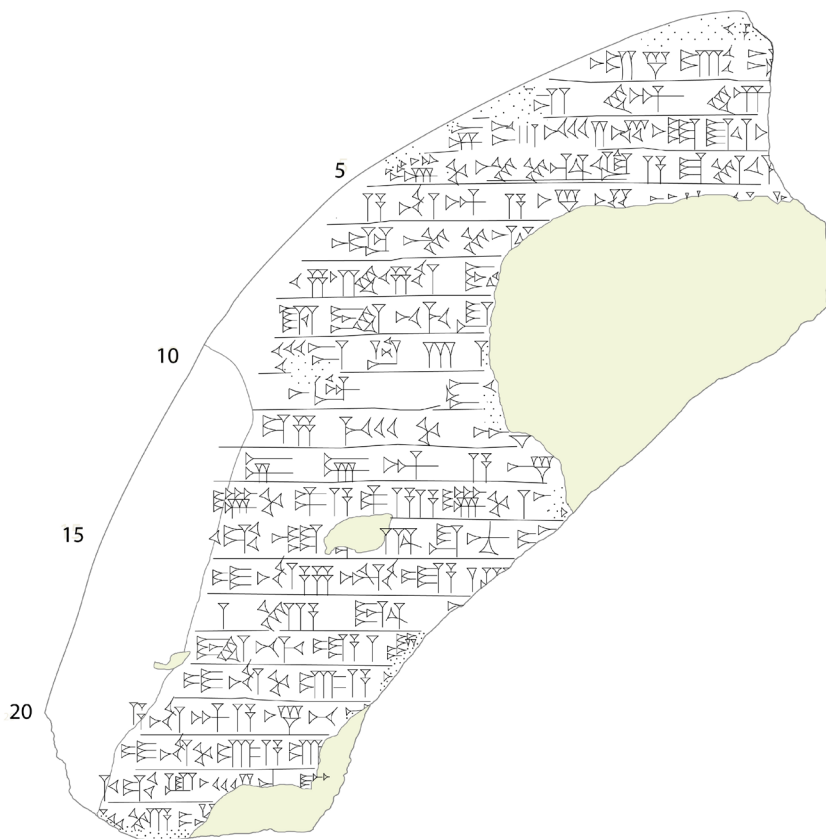
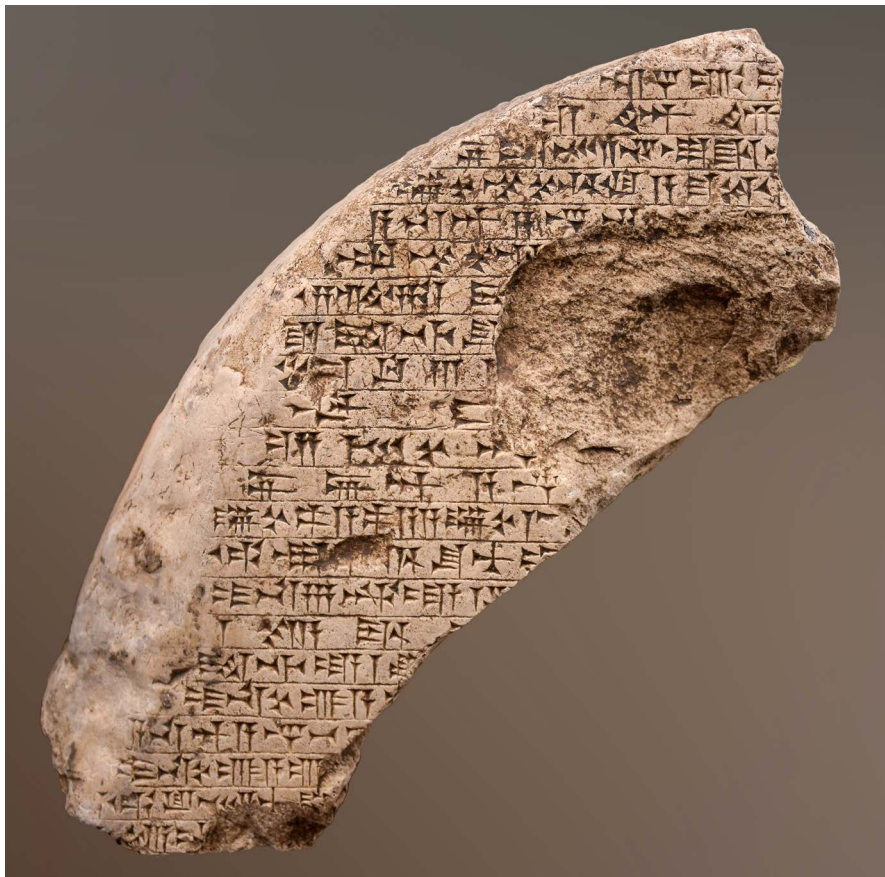
**Fig. 7:** Fragment 1, photograph and drawing of obverse and side (photograph by Sajjad Alibaigi, edited by Hossain Cheraghi Agha; drawing by Naser Aminikhah)

### 3.1 Fragment 1 (Figs. 7, 8)

This piece is part of a stele that was carved from a relatively high quality very light yellowish to white dolostone which was heavily smoothed after initial shaping. The piece is 14.1–14.9 cm thick with maximum dimensions of 28 high and 29 wide cm. The stele was framed with a raised edge 4.7 cm wide standing 0.7 cm proud of the surface. The piece, which formed part of the top right-hand side of the original stele, preserves part of the image of the Assyrian king and one divine symbol on the front, and the remains of 23 lines of cuneiform writing on the reverse. The king was depicted facing left wearing a headdress consisting of a fez with bands of decoration surmounted by a conical top. This headdress is typical of Assyrian kings from the time of Tiglath-pileser III onwards (Reade 2009, 254 f.). In Fragment 1 only the top band of the fez is preserved, decorated with a design of concentric circles. To the left of the king's head

is preserved the right part of a winged disc, the symbol of the sun god Shamash,<sup>9</sup> rendered with six feathers. By comparison with the Kition stele and the relief at Tang-i Var, the other symbols originally present on QTT 1 were probably the horned crown of Aššur, the crescent of Sin, the star of Ishtar, the lightning of Adad, the spade of Marduk, the stylus of Nabû and the seven orbs of the Sibitti. The inscription is carved, with great artistry, between rulings 11–12 mm high (line 17 is fractionally more). There are numerous locations where the stele appears to have suffered from deliberate hammer-blows: on the front, the top of the conical headdress, and perhaps the centre of the winged disc; and in multiple locations on the reverse.

<sup>9</sup> For the fact that this is the correct identification of the winged disc in these contexts, see Reade (1977, 38).



**Fig. 8:** Fragment 1, photograph and drawing of inscription on reverse (photograph by Sajjad Alibaigi, edited by Hossain Cheraghi Agha; drawing by John MacGinnis)



## Transliteration

- 1 [i]-<sup>1</sup>na 5<sup>1</sup> [BALA-e <sup>m</sup>pi-si-i-ri]  
 2 uru<sup>u</sup>gar-ga-m[is<sup>1</sup>-a-a i-na a-de-e šá DINGIR<sup>meš</sup> GAL<sup>meš</sup> iḥ-ṭi-ma]  
 3 <sup>m</sup>se-ṭi-im-[tar-ru-ú x x x x x]  
 4 ni-is<sup>1</sup>-su kab-tu ša DI[NGIR<sup>meš</sup> GAL<sup>meš</sup> la ip-la-aḥ-ma a-na <sup>m</sup>mi-ta-a]  
 5 LUGAL KUR mu-us-ki a-ma-te Ḫ[UL KUR a-šur<sup>ki</sup> iš-tap-par]  
 6 a-na <sup>d</sup>a-šur EN-<sup>f</sup>ia qa-ti<sup>1</sup> [áš-ši-ma šá-a-šu ga-a-du qin-ni-šú]  
 7 ka-mu-us-[su-nu ú-še-ša-šú-nu-ti-ma]  
 8 KÙ.GI KÙ.BABBAR i[t-ti NÍG.GA-šu É.GAL-šu ù uru<sup>u</sup>gar-ga-miš-a-a EN ḫi-iṭ-ṭi]  
 9 ša it-ti-šú [it-ti NÍG.GA-šu-nu áš-lu-lam i-na qé-reb KUR a-šur<sup>ki</sup> ú-ra-a]  
 10 <sup>f</sup>50<sup>1</sup> gišGIGIR 3 M[E anšepét-ḫal-lum 3 lim lúzu-uk ĠIR<sup>II</sup> i-na lib-bi-šú-nu]  
 11 ak-šu[r-ma i-na UGU ki-šir LUGAL-ti-ia ú-rad-di]  
 12 UN<sup>meš</sup> KUR aš-šur<sup>1</sup> [i-na qé-reb uru<sup>u</sup>gar-ga-miš ú-še-šib-ma]  
 13 ni-ir <sup>d</sup>a-šur [EN-ia e-mid-su-nu-ti]  
 14 lú.kur<sup>pa-a-pa-a-a</sup> lú.kur<sup>lal-l[u-uk-na-a-a</sup> UR.GI<sup>7</sup><sup>meš</sup> tar-bit É.GAL-ia a-na kur<sup>ka-ak-me-e</sup> id-bu-bu na-pa-di-iš]  
 15 ul-tu <sup>f</sup>áš<sup>1</sup>-[r]i-šú-nu a[s-su-ḫa-áš-šú-nu-ti-ma a-na qé-reb uru<sup>u</sup>di-maš-qi ša KUR MAR.TU<sup>ki</sup> ú-še-šib-šú-nu-ti]  
 16 i-na 6 BALA-ia <sup>m</sup>u[r-sa-a kurur-ar-ṭa-a-a a-na mba-ag-da-at-ti kur<sup>u</sup>-iš-di-iš-a-a]  
 17 <sup>m</sup>kar-da-x-[x x kurzi-ki-ta-a-a lúGAR KUR<sup>meš</sup> kur<sup>man-na-a-a</sup> lú<sup>r</sup>ak-bu-šú ša da-ba-ab-ti sar<sup>(6)</sup>-ra-ti iš-pur]  
 18 it-ti-ia <sup>m</sup>LU[GAL-GL.NA it-ti <sup>m</sup>a-za-a DUMU EN-šú-nu ú-šá-an-ki-ir-šú-nu-ti-ma a-na i-di-šú ú-ter-šú-nu-ti]  
 19 i-na KUR ú-a-<sup>f</sup>ú<sup>1</sup>-[uš KUR-i mar-ši suḫ-ḫur-ti kur<sup>man-na-a-a</sup> iš-ku-nu-ma ADDA <sup>m</sup>a-za-a EN-šú-nu id-du-ú]  
 20 a-na <sup>d</sup>a-šur BE-i[a a-na tur-ri-gi-mil-li kur<sup>ma-an-na-a-a</sup> a-na mi-šir KUR a-šur<sup>ki</sup> tur-ri qa-a-ti áš-ši-ma]  
 21 i-na KUR ú-a-<sup>f</sup>ú<sup>1</sup>-[uš KUR-i a-šar ADDA <sup>m</sup>a-za-a id-du-ú ma-šak <sup>m</sup>ba-ag-da-at-ti a-ku-uš-ma kur<sup>man-na-a-a</sup> ú-šab-ri]  
 22 <sup>m</sup>ul-lu-<sup>f</sup>su-nu<sup>1</sup> š[Eš-šú ša i-na gišGU.ZA LUGAL-ti ú-ši-bu šib-sa-at <sup>d</sup>a-šur UGU-šú-ma a-na <sup>m</sup>rū-sa-a kur<sup>URI-a-a</sup> it-ta-kil <sup>m</sup>a-šur-ZU]  
 23 <sup>f</sup>áš<sup>1</sup> kur<sup>1</sup>kar-a[l-la mit-ti-i kur<sup>al-lab-ra-a-a</sup> it-ti-ia uš-bal-kit-ma ARAD-tu kur<sup>ur-ar-ṭi</sup> e-pe-ši iz-kur-šú-nu-ti]

## Notes

2: The *miš* has an extraneous vertical.

3: The restoration is made from a comparison with the Najafabad stele, where the section corresponding to the first lines of QTT 1 translates as follows: “In my fifth regnal year I conquered the city Carchemish on the bank of the Euphrates River. Pisisis, its king, together with Šemtarru (<sup>m</sup>šem-tar-ru-ú) [. . . . ., along] with the possessions of his palace (and) everything from his royal treasure, I carried off as booty and brought to my city Aššur” (Frame 2021, 449: 20–21, restoring *mim-ma* [šá é] *ni-šir-ti-šú* in line 21). In QTT 1 the name is tendered as Šemtarru, with an /s/. With regard to the writing in the Najafabad stele, we may either propose a value of *sem<sub>x</sub>* for the sign šIM, or accept that the actual name began with a phoneme that did not correspond exactly to any of the sibilants in the Assyrian writing system, and was as a result heard and recorded differently by different scribes. Another possibility is that the divergent writings are a manifestation of the confusion that could arise due to the fact that /s/ and /š/ in Assyrian dialect

corresponded to /š/ and /s/ in Babylonian (Kaufmann 1974, 140–142; Luukko 2000, 9–11). Until further discoveries, there is ambiguity whether the end of line 20 in the Najafabad stele, and accordingly in the restoration here, should be read <sup>m</sup>sem-tar-ru-ú [...] or <sup>m</sup>sem-tar-ru ú- [...].

4: The *is* is written over an erased *iš*.

17: While still incomplete, QTT 1 adds one more syllable to the name of the ruler of Zikirtu, previously recovered as Kar- [...].

10: QTT 1 lists 300 cavalry among the troops integrated into the Assyrian army from Carchemish, whereas the Khorsabad annals of Room II (Frame 2021, 59: 75, 124: 17’), as well as the new fragments from Carchemish have 200 (Marchesi 2019; Frame 2021, 422: 7’), and a prism from Nimrud has 500 (Frame 2021, 329: 21).

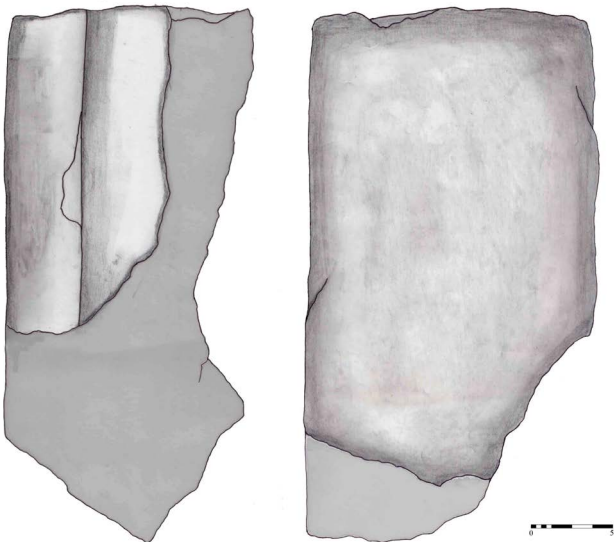
As the two fragments clearly belong together (see below), we will give a single translation of the reconstructed passage following the presentation of Fragment 2.

### Comments

The text of QTT 1 very closely parallels the corresponding sections narrating the campaigns of Sargon's fifth and sixth years in the Annals carved on the walls of Room II of the palace at Khorsabad; specifically, the section preserved in QTT 1 matches Frame (2021, 59–60) lines 72–84. The section on the campaign of the fifth year is also paralleled on the fragment of a cylinder of Sargon recently found at Carchemish in the excavations directed by N. Marchetti (Marchesi 2019; Frame 2021, 422). In numerous places this allows us to correctly read sections on the stele which would otherwise be very difficult. The part of the inscription recovered to date starts at the top of the reverse side of the stele. It may be assumed that summaries of the campaigns of the first to fourth years were carved on the front face.

### 3.2 Fragment 2 (Figs. 9, 10)

The second stele fragment was discovered in the extension to trench A, 1.7 m west of Fragment 1. The piece is carved from a similar cream limestone of the same geological type. Fragment 2 measures 34 cm high, 15.2 cm wide and 19.4 cm thick. The front is framed by a raised edge 4.8 cm wide standing 1.4 cm proud of the surface, which was uninscribed in this location. On the reverse are the remains of 32 lines of cuneiform. The piece originally formed part of the left side of the stele. The cuneiform is written within ruled lines 9–12 mm high with a line delineating the right-hand edge of the inscription. This piece also bears the marks of multiple hammer-blows.



**Fig. 9:** Fragment 2, photograph and drawing of inscription on reverse (photograph by Sajjad Alibaigi, edited by Hossain Cheraghi Agha; drawing by Naser Aminikhah)



**Fig. 10:** Fragment 2, photograph and drawing of inscription on reverse (photograph by Sajjad Alibaigi, edited by Hossain Cheraghi Agha; drawing by John MacGinnis)

## Transliteration

- 1' [šá kurkar-al-la mit-ti-i kural-lab-ra-a-a it-ti-ia uš-bal-kit-ma ARAD-tu kurur-ar-ṭi e-pe-ši] iz-kur-šu-nu-<sup>1</sup>ti<sup>1</sup>  
2' [i-na šu-ḥu-uṭ lib-bi-ia KUR.KUR šá-a-ti-na ki-ma ti-bu-ut a-ri-bi ak-tum-ma uru<sup>1</sup>zi-ir-tu URU šar-ru-ti-šu ša kur-  
ma-na]-<sup>1</sup>a-<sup>1</sup> ḥu-ḥa-riš as-ḥu-<sup>1</sup>up<sup>1</sup>  
3' [di-ik-ta-šú-nu ma-<sup>2</sup>a-at-tu a-duk uru<sup>1</sup>zi-ir-tu i-na IZI áš-ru-up-ma uru<sup>1</sup>zi-bi]-<sup>1</sup>a<sup>1</sup> uru<sup>1</sup>ar-ma-a-it <sup>1</sup>ak-šu-du<sup>1</sup>  
4' [mul-lu-su-nu kurma-an-na-a-a a-di kul-lat KUR-šú ki-i iš-tén ip-ḥu-ru-nim-ma GÌR<sup>1</sup>-ia iṣ-ba-tu-ma ar-ši-š]u-nu-ti  
re-e-<sup>1</sup>mu<sup>1</sup>  
5' [ša mul-lu-su-nu ḥi-ṭa-ti-šu a-bu-uk i-na GÌS.GU.ZA šar-ru-ti-šú ú-še-šib-šú-ma ma]-<sup>1</sup>da<sup>1</sup>-ta-šú<sup>1</sup> am-ḥur-<sup>1</sup>šú<sup>1</sup>  
6' [mit-ti-i kurAa-lab-ra-a-a a-di qin-ni-šu as-su-ḥa-ma ša maš-šur-ZU kurkar-al-la-a-a e-piš lem-ne-e-ṭ]i <sup>1</sup>ad<sup>1</sup>-di<sup>1</sup>-<sup>1</sup>šú<sup>1</sup>  
7' [bi-re-e-tu UN<sup>mes</sup> kurkar-al-la-a-a mal ba-šu-ú ù mit-ti-i a-di qin-ni-šu as-su-ḥa-am-ma ina qé-reb kurma-at-ti]  
<sup>1</sup>ú<sup>1</sup>-še-šib  
8' [. . . . . 6 URU<sup>mes</sup> šá kurni-ik-sa-am-ma na-gi]-<sup>1</sup>i<sup>1</sup> ak-šu-du  
9' [mGÌR<sup>1</sup>-LUGAL lúEN.URU ša uru<sup>1</sup>šur-ga-di-a i-na qa-ti aṣ-bat URU<sup>mes</sup>.ni šu-a-tu-nu UGU pi-ḥa-at kurpar-su-áš]  
<sup>1</sup>ú<sup>1</sup>-rad-di  
10' [m<sup>d</sup>EN-LUGAL-ú-šur uru<sup>1</sup>ki-še-si-im-a-a qa-ti ik-šu-ud-ma šá-a-šú a-di NÍG.ŠU É.GAL-šú a-na KUR aš-šur<sup>ki</sup> ú-r]a-áš-šu  
11' [ú-šu-ut SAG-ia lúEN NAM UGU URU-šú áš-kun UN<sup>mes</sup> uru<sup>1</sup>ki-še-si-im KUR na-gi-šú] <sup>1</sup>a<sup>1</sup>-bur-riš  
12' [ú-šar-bi-iṣ-ma uru<sup>1</sup>kar-<sup>d</sup>MAŠ.MAŠ MU-šú ab-bi ṣa-lam LUGAL-ti-ia ina] lib-bi ul-ziz  
13' [KUR É-sa-ag-bat KUR É-ḥi-ir-ma-mi KUR É-ú-mar-gi uru<sup>1</sup>ḥa-ar-ḥu-bar-ban uru<sup>1</sup>ki-lam-ba-a-ti uru<sup>1</sup>ar-ma-an-gu ak-šu-  
ud-ma UGU pi-ḥa-ti-šú] ú-rad-di  
14' [uru<sup>1</sup>ḥa-ar-ḥa-ra-a-a mki-ba-ba lúEN.URU-šú-nu ir-du-du-ma a-na m<sup>d</sup>da-al-ta-a KUR el-li-ba-a-a iš-pu-ru e-pe]š  
ar-du-ti  
15' [URU šu-a-tu ak-šu-ud-ma šal-lat-su áš-lu-la UN<sup>mes</sup> KUR.KUR ki-šit-ti qa-ti-ia i-na lib-bi ú-še-rib lúšu-ut SAG-ia  
LÚ.EN.N]AM UGU-šú-nu áš-<sup>1</sup>kun<sup>1</sup>  
16' [íd-tu e-li-tu<sup>4</sup> šá KUR a-ra-an-ze-šú ÍD-tu šap-li-tu šá É-<sup>m</sup>ra-ma-tu-a KUR ú-ri-qa-tu KUR si-ik-ri-is KUR šá-pa-  
ar-da KUR] <sup>1</sup>ú<sup>1</sup>-ri-ak-ku  
17' [6 na-gi-i ak-šu-ud-ma UGU-šú-nu ú-rad-di GÌS.TUKUL <sup>d</sup>aš-šur EN-ia a-na DINGIR-ti-šú-un áš-kun URU šu-a-tu  
ú]-še-piš-šú az-kur  
18' [MU-šú uru<sup>1</sup>kar-m<sup>1</sup>LUGAL-GI.NA šá 28 lúEN.URU<sup>mes</sup>.ni ša KUR ma-da-a-a dan-nu-ti ma-da-ta-šú-nu am-ḥur-ma ṣa-lam  
LUGAL-ti-ia i-na uru<sup>1</sup>kar-LUGA]L-GI.NA <sup>1</sup>ul-ziz<sup>1</sup>  
19' [i-na 7 BALA-ia mru-sa-a kurur-ar-ṭa-a-a it-ti mul-lu-su-nu KUR man-na-a-a sar<sup>(6)</sup>-ra-a-ti id-bu-ub-ma 22 URU uru-  
bi-ra-a-te]-šú e-kim-šu  
20' [a-mat taš-ger-ti ṭa-pil-ti mul-lu-su-nu a-na m<sup>d</sup>da-a-a-uk-ki lúGAR KUR kurman-na-a-a id-bu-ub-ma DUMU-šú a-na  
li]-i-ṭi im-ḥur-šú  
21' [a-na <sup>d</sup>aš-šur MAN DINGIR<sup>mes</sup> qa-a-ti áš-ši-ma 22 urubi-ra-a-ti šá-a-ti-na u na]-ge-e<sup>?</sup> ina [I]ZI  
22' [áš-ru-up a-na mi-šir KUR aš-šur ú-ter-ra m<sup>d</sup>da-a-a-uk-ka a-di kim-ti]-šú as<sup>1</sup>-su-[ḥa]  
23' [KUR man-na-a-a dal-ḥu ú-taq-qi-in ma-da-at-tu ša m<sup>ia</sup>-an-zu-ú LUGAL KUR na-<sup>?</sup>i-ri i-na uru<sup>1</sup>ḥu-bu-u]š-ki-a URU-šú  
a[m]-ḥur  
24' [9 urubi-ra-a-ti . . . . . ša 5 na-gi-i šá mur-sa-a kurur-a]r-ṭa-a-a <sup>1</sup>ak<sup>1</sup>-šu-du  
25' [mar-ši-ti-šú-nu . . . . . GU<sup>4mes</sup>-šú-nu ṣe-n]i-šú-nu áš-l[u]-la  
26' [8 urubi-ra-a-ti a-di URU<sup>mes</sup>.ni ša li-me-ti-šú-nu ša KUR tu-a-ia-di na-ge-e šá m<sup>te</sup>-lu-si-na kurand]i-a-a ak-<sup>1</sup>šú<sup>11</sup>-du  
27' [4 lim 2 ME UN<sup>mes</sup> a-di mar-ši-ti-šú-nu áš-lu-la-ma urubi-ra-a-te šá-a-ti-na ap-pul aq]-qur i-na GIBIL-ma <sup>1</sup>aq<sup>1</sup>-  
m[u]  
28' [ṣa-lam LUGAL-ti-ia DÙ-uš-ma li-i-ti <sup>d</sup>a-šur EN-ia UGU-šú áš-ṭur i-na uru<sup>1</sup>zi-ir-ti URU šar-ru-ti] ša KUR man-na-  
a-a ul-[ziz]  
29' [UN<sup>mes</sup> ÍD-ti e-li-ti ù šap-li-ti ša i-na ger-ri-ia maḥ-ri-ti it-ti UN<sup>mes</sup>] uru<sup>1</sup>ḥar-ḥa[r] am-<sup>1</sup>nu<sup>1</sup>-[u]  
30' [KUR É sa-an-gi-bu-ti KUR ú-ri-qa-tu KUR si-ik-ri-is KUR šá-pa-ar-da KUR up-pa-ri-a a-na i-di-šú-nu ú-ter-ru-ma  
ib]-<sup>1</sup>bal<sup>1</sup>-ki-tu <sup>1</sup>it-ti-ia<sup>1</sup>  
31' [. . . . .] a [ x x x (x)]  
32' [. . . . .] x [ x x x (x)]

## Notes

The text preserved on Fragment 2 corresponds to lines 84–110 in the Annals (Frame 2021, 60–62).

3f.: In multiple places the scribe has written *akšudu* where we would expect *akšud*. If this is not to be taken simply as free variant – justified as a CV sign in final position used to represent the consonant only – the spelling may perhaps be more specifically understood as an example of a written CV-CV sequence standing for spoken CVC, the aim of which was, presumably, to disambiguate the final consonant (Worthington 2012, 170. 183).

6'–7': The restoration is based on a comparison with Frame 2021, 450, no. 117 ii 31, as well as Frame 2021, 207, no. 34:2 and 267, no. 63 i 16'.

8': The exact restoration is conjectural: for comparanda see Frame 2021, 60: 92, 126, no. 4: 38 and 144, no. 7: 58: the  $\text{UN}^{\text{mes}}$  *urusu-uk-ki-a uruba-a-la urua-bi-ti-ik-ni uruPa-ap-pa urulal-lu-uk-nu ul-tu aš-ri-šu-nu as-suh-šu-nu-ti-ma* of the last is certainly too long for the space available.

11': The restoration of the second half of this line is based on line 39 in the Najafabad stele (Frame 2021, 451: 39).

25': The word before  $\text{GU}_4^{\text{mes}}$ -*šú-nu* may have been ...-*ba-ni* (Frame 2021, 62: 106).

27': The restoration at the beginning of the line comes from the Annals (Frame 2021, 62: 107).

31': Perhaps the *a* supplies the middle sign of  $\text{uruKa-x-na}$  (cf. Frame 2021, 62: 111).

The translation below follows Frame (2021).

## Translation

In my fifth [regnal year, Pisiri(s)] of the city Carchemish [sinned against the treaty (sworn) by the great gods and (together with)] Sem[tarru . . . . . He did not respect] the weighty oath of the [great gods and repeatedly sent] messages hos[tile to Assyria to Mitâ (Midas)], king of the land Musku. [I raised] my hand(s) to the god Aššur, my lord, [and brought him out, together with his family], in bondage. [I carried off as booty] gold (and) silver along with [the property of his palace and the guilty people of the city of Carchemish] who (had sided) with him [together with their possessions. I brought (them) to Assyria. I conscripted 50 chariots, 300 [cavalry (and) 3,000 foot soldiers from among them and added (them) to my royal army. I settled] people of Assyria [in the city of Carchemish and imposed upon them] the yoke of the god Aššur, [my lord]. The people of the cities Pāpa (and) Lall[uknu, dogs who had been brought up in my palace, conspired with the land of Kakmê for the purpose of [separating (from Assyria). I deported them] from their

(own) places [and settled them in the city of Damascus of the land Amurru].

In my sixth regnal year, U[rsâ, the Urartian, sent his mounted messenger with a mendacious message to Bagdati of the land Uišdiš and] Karda-[... of the land Zikirtu, governors of the land Mannea. He made them hostile] against me, Sa[rگون, (and) against Azâ, the son of their (former) lord and made them side with him (Rusâ). They brought about the rout of the Manneans] on Mount Ua[uš, a rugged mountain, and threw down the corpse of Azâ, their lord. I raised my hand(s) to the god Aššur, my lord, [in order to avenge the Manneans (and) to return (that territory) to Assyria]. On Mount Ua[uš, the mountain where they had thrown down the corpse of Azâ, I flayed the skin from Bagdati and (then) showed (it) to the Manneans]. As for Ullusunu, [his brother, who had sat on the royal throne, the wrath of the god Aššur (was directed) against him. He (Ullusunu) then put his trust in Rusâ, the Urartian. He caused Aššur-lē'i] of the land Karal[la (and) Ittî of the land Allabria to rebel against me and] swore them [(to) obeisance to Urartu. In the fury of my heart I spread over those lands like a swarm of locusts and] overwhelmed [his Mannean royal city Izirtu] like a bird trap. [I inflicted a major defeat on them. I burnt Izirtu with fire and] conquered [the cities of Zibi]a and Armait. [Ullusunu the Mannean together with all of his land gathered together as one and grasped my feet]. I had pity upon them [(and) forgave Ullusunu his crimes. I set him on his royal throne and] received tribute from him. [I deported Ittî of the land of Allabria together with his family, and as for the evildoer Aššur-le'i of the land Karalla, I threw him [in irons. I deported the entire population of the land of Karalla including Ittî and his family and] settled (them) [in Hamath. I conquered [. . . . . six cities of the district of Niksamma. I caught Šep-šarri the city ruler of Šurgadia in my hand (and)] added [those cities to the province of Parsuaš. I caught Bel-šar-ušur of the city of Kišesim and] carried him off [to Assyria together with the property of his palace. I appointed a eunuch of mine as governor over his city. I made the people of Kišesim and its territory lie down] as in a meadow [and I (re)named it Kar-Nergal]. I set up [my royal image] inside it. [I conquered the land of Bit-Sagbat, the land of Bit-Ĥirmami, the land of Bit-Umargi, the city of Ĥarĥubarban, the city of Kilambati (and) the city of Armangu, and] added [them to its province. The people of Ĥarĥar drove out their city ruler Kibaba and sent their] submission [to Daltâ of the land of Ellipi. I conquered that city and despoiled it of plunder. I settled (there) people from the (other) lands which I had conquered, and] appointed [a eunuch of mine as gov]ernor over them. [I conquered the upper river of the land of Aranzešu and the lower river of the land of Bit-Ramatua, the land of Uriqatu, the land of Sikriš, the land of Šaparda, the land



Fig. 11: The stele base, in situ and drawing (photograph by Sajjad Alibaigi; drawing by Naser Aminikhah)

of] Uriaku, [six districts, and added them to them (the population of Ḥarḥar). I established the weapon of Aššur my lord to be their divinity]. I (re)built [that city and] (re)named it [Kar-Šarrukin. I received tribute from twenty-eight mighty city rulers of the land of Media and] erected [my royal image in Kar]-Šarrukin.

[In the seventh year of my reign Rusâ the Urartian tricked Ullusunu the Mannean and] took away from him [twenty-two of his fortresses. He spoke treason and libel against Ullusunu to Dayukku, a governor of the land of Mannea, and] received [his son] as hostage. [I raised my hands to Aššur, king of the gods, and I burnt those twenty-two fortresses and (their)] districts with fire [and re-absorbed them into the borders of Assyria]. I deported [Dayukku together with his family and restored order to the troubled land of Mannea]. I received [in the city of Ḥubu] škia [the tribute of Ianzû, a king of the Nairi lands]. I conquered [9 fortresses . . . . . of 5 districts of Ursâ the Ura] rṭian. I plundered [their property, . . . . ., their oxen (and)] their [sheep]. I conquered [eight fortresses of the land of Tuayadi, a district belonging to Telusina of the land of And] ia, [together with their surrounding cities. I carried off as booty 4,200 people together with their property. I destroyed, demolished and burnt [those fortresses] with fire. [I created a royal image of myself, wrote on it the victories of Aššur my lord, and] set it up [in Izirtu], the Mannean [royal city]. The people of the upper and lower rivers, whom in my previous campaign] I had counted [as citizens] of Ḥarḥar, [subverted

the land of Bit-Sangibuti, the land of Uriqatu, the land of Sikriš, the land of Šaparda (and) the land of Upparia and] they revolted [against me . . . . .

### 3.3 The stele base (Fig. 11)

A fragment of a rectangular piece of limestone with a carved recess (or mortise) was also on the floor of the Sassanian storage pit. Overall the piece measured 79 cm long by 31 cm wide and 28 cm high. The recess/mortise measured 55 cm long, 13 to 15 cm wide and up to 10 cm deep. This piece is provisionally interpreted as the base for a stele, an interpretation only strengthened by the fact that it once again bears the marks of repeated hammer blows. It should be noted, however, that the overall width of the original stele at its base cannot have been less than 60 cm (this follows from the fact that Fragment 1 measures 29 cm across, and that this is less than half the width) and it is more likely to have been approximately 65 cm wide (see Fig. 12). Consequently, if this piece is correctly identified as a base, the stele would have required a tenon that matched the mortise.

## 4 Discussion

The contents of the two inscribed fragments match exactly, with the last line of QTT 1 reproducing part of a sentence of which a continuation is found in the first line of QTT 2. In the reconstructed sentence

ʿšá kur<sup>1</sup>kar-a[l-la mīt-ti-i kur<sup>1</sup>al-lab-ra-a-a it-ti-ia uš-bal-kit-ma  
ARAD-tu kur<sup>1</sup>ur-ar-ṭi e-pe-ši] iz-kur-šu-nu-ʿti<sup>1</sup>

which corresponds to a passage in lines 84–85 in the Khor-sabad Annals (Frame 2021, 60), the first section in bold is from QTT 1 line 23 and the second section from QTT 2 line 1. It is natural to suppose that these two pieces are from the same original monument, and this is now confirmed by the results of petrological analysis. An examination of samples taken from each piece by Mr. Sarem Amini of the Geoarchaeometry Group of the Zaminrizkavan Research Company in Tehran determined that both pieces are dolostone (dolomiticrite-dolosparite with dissolutional voids) from the Shahbazan formation, outcrops of which are visible to the west and southwest of the site. Analysis of the chemical composition evaluated differences in the percentages present of eight elements, interpreted to indicate that the two fragments are certainly from the same geological formation, with nothing arguing that they cannot be from the same block. The nearest accessible source is an outcrop of the formation located in the Chahar Zabar-Hassan Abad pass, just under 30 km south of the site (Alibaigi/MacGinnis/Rezaei in press).

The petrological results remove any doubts which might arise from a small number of apparent differences between the formal characteristics of the two pieces, all of which can be explained:

- (i) the difference in thicknesses is due to the fact that Fragment 1 (14.1–14.9 cm thick) is from a higher part of the stele than Fragment 2 (19.4 cm thick), and there can in any case be variations in the width of the two sides of a stele;<sup>10</sup>
- (ii) the difference in the depth of the border frames (7 mm vs. 14 mm) is within the normal parameters of variation;
- (iii) the fact that Fragment 2 has a margin line down the side whereas Fragment 1 does not is simply due to the fact that the two pieces are from different sides of the stele – it is not uncommon for a margin to be incised only down the right-hand side.

	QTT 1	QTT 2
ki		
tu		
id		
kur		

Fig. 12: Palaeographic comparisons between Fragment 1 and Fragment 2 (John MacGinnis)

There are no significant differences in the palaeography (Fig. 12). The fact that the TU, ID and KUR from Fragment 1 shown here seem to be written in a chunkier style than those in Fragment 2 may be ascribed to differential weathering. The single instance where there appears to be a difference in sign formation – the KI from Fragment 1 has a *Winkelhaken* above two horizontals in the middle, whereas Fragment 2 has three horizontals – is too inconsequential to place any weight on (though it may, perhaps, betray the hand of a different sculptor).

The relative placement of the two fragments is shown in Fig. 13: the slightly sloping sides in this reconstruction are dictated by Fragment 2 – while Assyrian stelae more commonly have vertical sides, a parallel is found in the Nimrud stele of Shamshi-Adad V.

Having demonstrated that the two pieces are indeed from the same original stele, and given that QTT 2 includes the campaign of Sargon's seventh year, this cannot have been either of the stelae which the king erected in Kar-Nergal (Kisešim) and Kar-Sharrukin (Ḥarḥar) in the course of the campaign of his sixth year (Frame 2021, 61: 95. 100). The most obvious alternative is that the pieces from Quwakh Tapeh are from a stele erected in the course of the campaigns of either Sargon's seventh or sixteenth years of reign.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Such is the case, for example, with the Nimrud Monolith of Ashurnasirpal II.

<sup>11</sup> We would like to pass on the observation of an anonymous reviewer that the fact that Semtarru is only otherwise mentioned in the Najafabad-Stele (made in 716 BCE) might be taken to suggest that the Quwakh Tapeh stele was created between 715 and 711 BCE; however, as the episode involving Semtarru occurred in the course of the campaign of Sargon's fifth year, this cannot be regarded as certain.

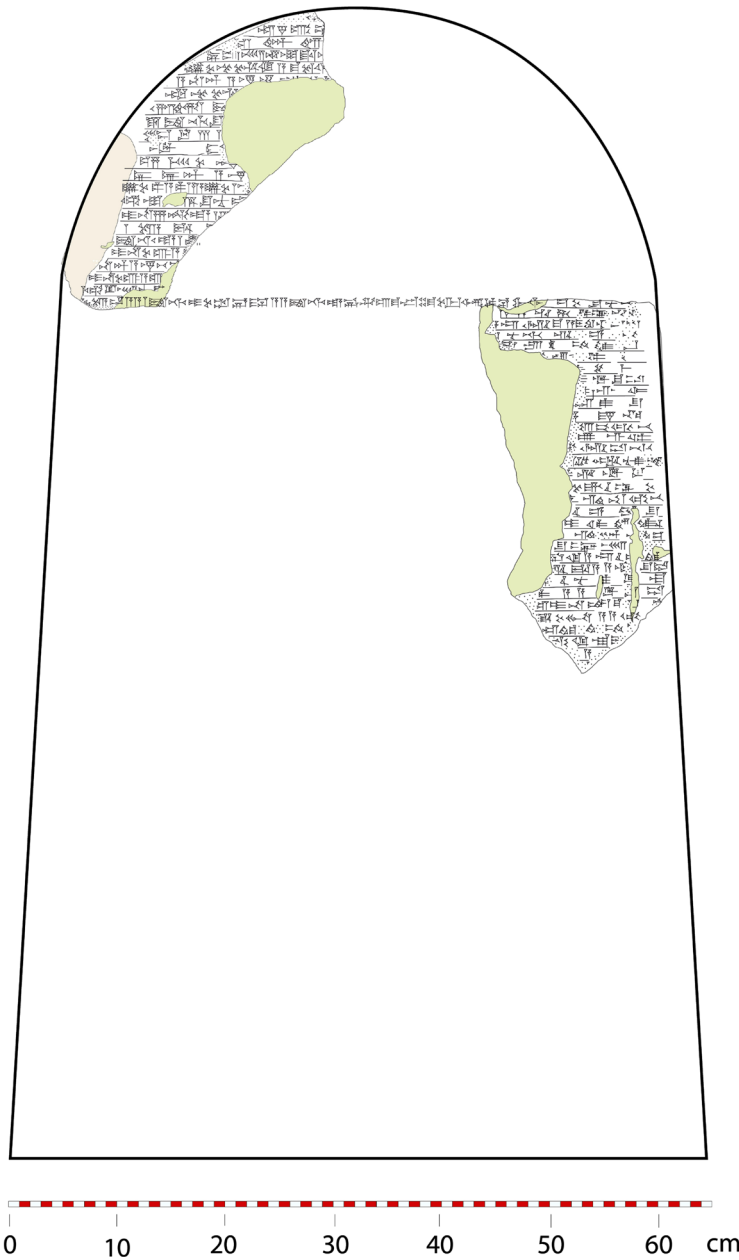


Fig. 13: The relative positions of Fragment 1 and Fragment 2 in a hypothetically reconstructed stele (John MacGinnis)

The accounts of the campaigns of the fifth, sixth and seventh years given in QTT 1 and QTT 2 closely match the versions given in the annals.<sup>12</sup> While there are variations, most of these are minor and do not alter the basic meaning of the text. An exception is a set of variants that occurs in the context of the defeat of Karalla and deportation of its ruler. The Najafabad stele, an epigraph on a badly damaged relief from Khorsabad and a prism fragment from Assur all

<sup>12</sup> The Najafabad stele gives a very detailed account of the campaign of Sargon's sixth year but its account of the campaign of the fifth year is much more abridged than that in the annals, or indeed in QTT 1.

have formulations for the ruler of Karalla, Aššur-le'i, being captured and thrown in irons.<sup>13</sup> As far as we can tell, this is

<sup>13</sup> The Najafabad stele has "I captured Aššur-le'i of the city of Karalla, an evil-doer. In my camp I threw him and his soldiers in [iron] fetters" (Frame 2021, 450 no. 117 ii 31); the relief epigraph states "I put iron fetters on the hands and feet of [Itti] of the city of Paddiru and Aššur-le'i [of the land of] Karalla" (Frame 2021, 207 no. 34:2); and the prism fragment from Assur has "I threw [Aššur-le'i of the city of Kar]alla and Itti of the city of Paddiru in iron fetters" (Frame 2021, 267 no. 63 i 16'). It may be imagined that the epigraph was part of a sequence of sculptures depicting the capture, imprisonment and putting to death of Aššur-le'i (and others), in the same manner as the Dunanu sequences



the version of events followed by QTT 2 (the greater part of the relevant sentence is not preserved). The Great Display inscription, by contrast, has “I flayed the skin of Aššur-le’i” (Frame 2021, 144 No.7 line 56). Presumably both these traditions are true – Aššur-le’i was thrown in irons, and subsequently flayed alive.

Another interesting set of variations is to be seen in the narratives of the capture of Kišesim and the removal of Bel-šar-ušur. The Annals and the Display Inscription have (with only minor variations) the statement “I captured Bel-šar-ušur of the city of Kišesim and brought him together with the property of his palace to Assyria. I appointed a eunuch of mine as governor over his city. I installed the gods who go before me inside it and renamed it Kar-Nergal. I erected a royal image of myself there”.<sup>14</sup> The Najafabad stele, by contrast, has a much more expanded account: “I came to the city of Hundir. Bel-šar-ušur of the city of Kišesim spoke mendaciously to the city rulers of [its] en[virons...]. He brought before me in the city Hundir as his tribute horses, oxen, sheep (and) goats. I received them inside my camp [...] I counted (them) as booty. [I brought to Assyria] horses trained to the yoke, property, possessions, gold, silver, multi-coloured garments, linen garments, utensils and battle gear. I had made [the weapons of the deities Aššur, Sin, Šamaš], Adad and Ištar, my lords who go before me, and installed (them) there. [I had] the people of the city Kišesim (and) its district [lie down] as in a meadow. [I set up my image inside it]. I appointed a eunuch of mine as governor over [them]” (Frame 2021, 450–1 No. 117: ii 35b – 41a). The text of QTT 2 is interesting because, while it basically follows the succinct summary of the Annals, it does demonstrate additional intertextuality with the extended version of the Najafabad stele with the inclusion of the phrase “I had the people of the city Kišesim and its district lie down as in a meadow”.

Sargon was a prolific commissioner of stelae. These include the Kition stele (Radner 2010; Frame 2021, 402–409 No. 103), which is complete; the Najafabad stele (Levine 1972, 25–50; Frame 2021, 444–454 No. 117; Fig. 14), which is damaged but still very substantially preserved; and fragments from many more, evidently smashed to smithereens in antiquity, found at Hamath (Hawkins 2004; Frame 2021, no. 105), Samaria (Horowitz/Oshima 2006, 115), Ashdod

at Nineveh (see Reade 1979, 97–109; Russell 1999, 156–199; Reade 2005, 21 f.; MacGinnis 2020b, 161 f.).

<sup>14</sup> The various versions of the Annals have “I captured Bel-šar-ušur of the city of Kišesim and brought him together with the property of his palace to Assyria” (Frame 2021, 60–61 no. 1: 93–95; 126, no. 4:39’–41’); the Display Inscription has “As for Bel-šar-ušur of the city of Kišesim, I brought him together with his property, possessions, (and) the treasure of his palace to Assyria” (Frame 2021, 144, no. 7:59–60).

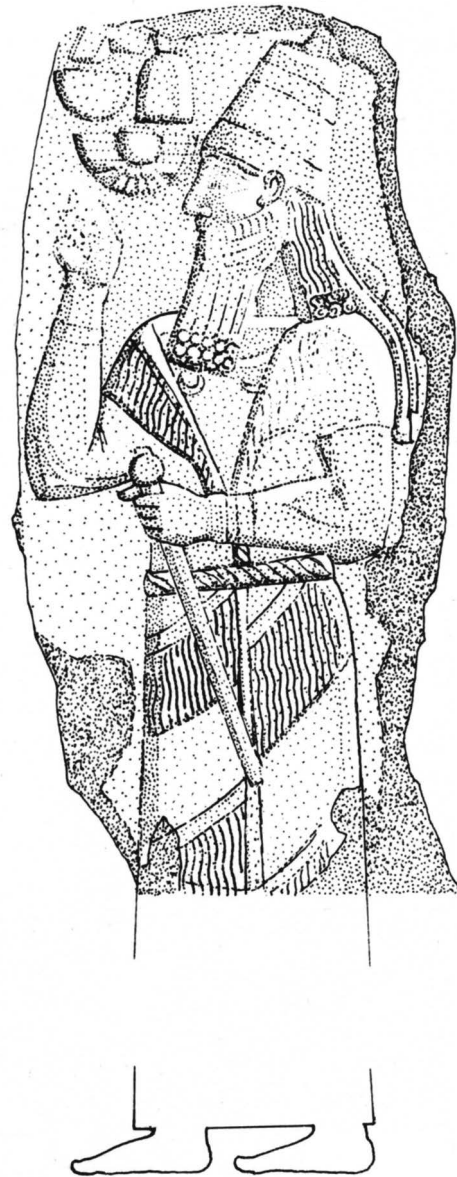


Fig. 14: The Najafabad stele (Börker-Klähn 1982, vol. 2, 173)

(Horowitz/Oshima 2006, 40–41; Frame 2021 no. 104), Tayinat (Lauinger/Batiuk 2015; Frame 2021 no. 108), Til Barsip (Frame 2021 no. 107), Acharneh (Frame 2006; Frame 2021, no. 106), Carchemish (Marchetti 2019/20, 283) and, now, Quwakh Tapeh. There are also numerous mentions of the erection of stelae in Sargon’s royal inscriptions. To date, these fall into three groups: (a) stelae set up in the Zagros – at Kar-Nergal (Kišesim), Kar-Šarrukin (Ḥarḥar) and Izirtu – referred to in multiple places; (b) the stele set up in Cyprus, referred to in a prism from Nimrud (Frame 2021, 335, no. 74 vii 42–43); and (c) stelae set up in western Syria – at Hamath, Hatarikka and the land of KUR-<sup>2</sup>u-a – mentioned in the Acharneh fragment (Frame 2021, 416). In short, the correspondence between recovered stelae (and fragments) and references in Sargon’s

inscriptions is patchy: while some recovered stelae are referred to in the royal inscriptions, others are not; there are also, as expected, numerous instances where stelae referred to in the royal inscriptions have not yet been recovered.

Standing back from the textual level, there is another respect in which we can contrast the Najafabad stele with the pieces from Quwakh Tapeh. The latter are from a superbly executed monument of the classic Assyrian type, with curved top, a raised border, a finely rendered image of the king and divine symbols, beautifully written with well-formed signs. On the other hand, both the Najafabad stele and the “Iran stele” of Tiglath-pileser III (Levine 1972, 11–24; Tadmor/Yamada 2011, 80–87) are much less well executed. We suggest that these two groups represent two different types of stelae, “commemorative stelae” and “campaign stelae” respectively. The Najafabad and Iran exemplars would be campaign stelae, composed and erected in the course of a campaign. The text of these stelae would have been produced by the campaign scribes who will have brought with them official versions of previous campaigns which they could abridge and extract as necessary when composing the historical prelude to the account of the new campaign. The commemorative stelae, on the other hand, are perfectly executed monuments, designed and executed by a team of top imperial craftsmen, at a time when the official record of the campaign had been written up and “finalised” from the notes taken on campaign and with the time and resources to produce a monument of the highest quality. Incidentally, another source of information available to the court historians will have been the booty lists, and it is interesting that the *Annals* (Room XIV) give a longer list of the booty taken in the campaign of Sargon’s fifth year (Frame 2021, 124: 15’–17’) than is found in any of the stelae. It should be noted that Malekzadeh/Ahmadzadeh Khosroshahi (2017) have made a similar observation with regard to Assyrian monuments in Iran, noting how the inferior quality of the rock reliefs at Tang-i Var, Eshkaft-e Gulgul and Mishkhas suggests that they were carved by local artisans without great artistic ability.

Both the stele fragments and the base bear the marks of repeated hammer blows. There can be little doubt that these are the result of vandalism carried out at the time when the Assyrians were forced to withdraw from Iran. Such targeted destruction of stelae is very well documented: in addition to the fragmented stelae of Sargon II mentioned above, other examples of Assyrian stelae which were deliberately smashed in antiquity include the Iran stele of Tiglath-pileser III (see above); the stelae of Shalmaneser III from Tell Sheikh Hamad (Millard/Tadmor 1973; Grayson 1996, 206 f.; Radner 2012) and Aushariye (Eidem 2016, 107); the stelae of Esarhad-don from Zincirli (Leichty 2011, 181–186), Qaqun (Horowitz/

Oshima 2006, 111), Ben Shemen (Horowitz/Oshima 2006, 45; Cogan 2008; Leichty 2011, 291 f.) and the Orontes (Leichty 2011, 292); the Rassam Obelisk (Reade 1980); and the stele from Anat (Amin 2019). This deliberate destruction forms part of a wider iconoclasm enacted as part of the devastation wrought upon Assyria as the Empire collapsed that also included the destruction of the royal tombs in Assur, the smashing of vassals treaties and the mutilation of statues and palace reliefs (Nylander 1980; Roobaert 1996; Lauinger 2012; MacGinnis 2018; Simpson 2020).

The fragments recovered from Quwakh Tapeh do not tell us where the stele was erected, and we are still at the stage where there are huge uncertainties remaining in the understanding of the historical geography of the central Zagros in the Neo-Assyrian period. While there are different views on the depth of the Assyrian penetration of the Zagros, it is generally agreed that the territory formally incorporated within the provincial system extended as far as the Asadabad plain (with Najafabad) and the Nahavand plain (with Tapeh Giyan), though identifications of specific places differ. Levine (1974a, 111–119), for example, locates Ḥarḥar in the central or eastern Mahidasht, Reade (1978, 140–141) in the area of Nehavend or Malayer, and Radner (2003, 120; 2013, 446) at Tapeh Giyan. In any case, Quwakh Tapeh was certainly not the only major Assyrian centre in the area – the imposing site of Tapeh Kheibar, just 9 km to the northwest, has every appearance of having been another Assyrian stronghold (Alibaigi/Aminikhah/Fatahi 2016; Alibaigi et al. 2021).<sup>15</sup> But while it seems to us highly likely that Quwakh Tapeh and Tapeh Kheibar are both fortified cities in the land of Ḥarḥar, the available data does not allow the specific identification of either of these sites.<sup>16</sup>

Looking to the future, it is clear that Quwakh Tapeh and nearby Tapeh Kheibar are sites of immense promise. Assyrian stelae were, in general, erected in or just outside palaces, temples and city gates. As the stelae fragments are unlikely to have been moved very far from their original location, the implication is that the remains of such structures lie buried somewhere in the site. It is to be hoped and expected that further investigation at Quwakh Tapeh can lead both to the identification of the site and to results which will have the potential to revolutionise our understanding of the character and workings of the Assyrian administration in western Iran.

<sup>15</sup> Perhaps this may be compared to the situation in the province of Nōdh-Ardaširakan in the Sasanian period where, while Erbil remained the principal religious centre, the administrative and military centre had shifted to Hazza (Nováček [e. a.] 2013, 4).

<sup>16</sup> Incidentally, whichever site is Ḥarḥar should also preserve a stele of Shalmaneser III (Grayson 1996, 68 A.O.102.14: 124 f.).

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