Hammurapi and the Wall of the Cloister

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Ashmolean 1922.183 is a brick fragment inscribed in an early Old Babylonian monumental hand with the first 21 lines of a royal inscription. Langdon published a copy of this brick in OECT 1 pl.30c. Unfortunately, the provenance of the brick was not known when it was acquired by the museum. This, coupled with the fact that the beginning of the brick, where we would expect to find the name of the ruler responsible for the erection of the structure from which it came, is largely worn away, meant that the attribution of the brick, even to the extent of the dynasty to which it belonged, has been in doubt since its publication. Langdon made no suggestion in this connection.\(^1\)

W. Hallo, probably because of the mention of the sun god Utu in the text, suggested that it might be a text of the Larsa dynasty listing it in his bibliography\(^2\) as text one of Rim-Sin. This designation was followed by I. Kärki, who provided the first transliteration of the text based on Langdon's copy.\(^3\)

R. Borger, presumably noting what appears to be a -na in the first line of Langdon's copy suggested that the text might be one of Sin-iddinam.\(^4\) However, Walker, having collated the text, noted\(^5\) that the script of the brick is quite different from the other bricks of Sin-iddinam, thus throwing this attribution into doubt. Walker did note that the script was of an early Old Babylonian hand.

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

\[
\text{b[â]d-gâ-gi,-a lu-mu-du}
\]

'built the wall of the cloister.'

Although ga-gi,-a's 'cloisters' were not restricted just to the city of Sippar,\(^7\) the most famous ga-ia's was that of the god Šamaš in that city and virtually all our text references to ga-ia's refer to that structure. That the Ashmolean piece refers to the ga-ia in Sippar is now confirmed by the discovery of a duplicate of the brick in Istanbul, discussed below, which comes from Sippar. Bearing in mind the Old Babylonian script of the brick we might expect that the brick belongs to the first dynasty of Babylon, whose kings lavished a great deal of effort on the city of Sippar. Hammurapi claims to have built the wall of the ga-ia in his fourth year\(^8\) and Ammi-ditana in his eighteenth year.\(^9\) It is among these rulers that we would expect to ascribe the Ashmolean brick.

In collation work in Istanbul\(^10\) I luckily came upon an unpublished duplicate of the Ashmolean brick in the Museum of the Ancient Orient, Ef 9044.\(^11\) The Istanbul piece is also a fragment, containing the end of the inscription, and has a six line overlap with the Ashmolean piece in the middle of the complete text. Like the Ashmolean piece it is an inscribed brick with the text running down the edge of the brick. The width of the edge is completely preserved in both exemplars being 8.0 cm in the Ashmolean piece and 8.8 cm in the Istanbul example. Although the bricks are otherwise fragmentary the original dimensions were probably roughly the same. The Istanbul Museum Inventory lists Ef 9004 as coming from Sippar and was presumably obtained through Scheil's excavations at the site, although the brick is not mentioned in his description of the finds.\(^12\) This may

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

\(^2\)W. Hallo, BiOr 18 (1961) p.10.

\(^3\)I. Kärki, Die Sumerischen Königsinschriften der Frühbabylonischen Zeit, p.71; Die Sumerischen und Akkadischen Königsinschriften der Altbabylonischen Zeit, pp.141-2.

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

\(^5\)C.B.F. Walker, Cuneiform Brick Inscriptions, p.129.

\(^6\)That the text is in the first person is indicated by the reference to dudu lugal-mu 'Utú, my lord' in line 4.
be because the attribution of the piece was not evident because of its fragmentary nature. I was also able to collate the Ashmolean piece anew. This collation revealed that the name of Hammurapi is indeed found in the first line of the Ashmolean brick, confirming the correlation of this royal inscription with the Hammurapi year formula. Herewith follows an edition of the text based on the two bricks.

A Ash. 1922.183, inscribed brick, 22.0 x 6.0 x 8.0 cm
B 9044, inscribed brick, 22.0 x 7.8 x 8.8 cm
* not complete original dimension

1. ri₃₃-[am]-ra-t₃₃-p₅₃
2. lu₃₃-[ga]-ka₃₃-la-ka₃₃
3. lu₃₃-[ga]-k₃₃-DINGIR.RA ki₃₃
4. u₃₃-[u]tu₃₃ lugal-mu
5. x x x a
6. x x x x ni
7. x UD? x x x
8. dagal-e-dè
9. in₃₃ in₃₃ du₁₁-ga-a₁₁
10. gi₃₃ in₃₃-tuk-ni-me-en
11. gù-hù₃₃ ma-an-dè
12. ri₃₃-bit₃₃ ḫu₃₃-mu₃₃-da-an-āg
13. u₃₃-
14. igi-gāl diri-dè
15. a-gār a-gar-ra
16. e ḫu₃₃-mu₃₃-si-ga
17. úgu-
18. bād gā-gi₃₃-a-
19. ḫu₃₃-mu₃₃-du₃₃
20. ṣā-
21. i₃₃-[a]-a-hē-gāl
22. ḫu₃₃-mu₃₃-ba-al
23. a-nam-hē
24. hē-bi-dè
25. ṣam-bi-sè
26. da-
27. nin-zim₃₃-
28. hē₃₃-[en]-ṣi-hù₃₃-le
29. ki₃₃-utu
30. nita-dam-ni-
31. ti₃₃-[u]-sù₃₃-[rā]
32. bāl₃₃-[n]am-[…]
33. su₃₃-[u]₃₃-[x] x
34. […] ḫe₃₃-[en]-ṣi₃₃-[…]
35. […] sa₃₃-[e]-[ē₃₃]
36. [ba-ma-ab-rig]-gel

Hammurapi brick.

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

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

Textual variants.
17: B omits this line.

Translation.

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

Commentary.

2f.: These are probably to be restored [lugal kalag] lu₃₃-[ga]-k₃₃-DINGIR.RA ki₃₃] based on the standard epithets of Hammurapi found in other royal inscriptions.

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

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

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

12: Although the á sign is not clear at the beginning of the line we can hardly expect anything different in connection with the -āg at the end. In the context the reading makes excellent sense. The traces at the beginning exclude a reading ki₃₃.

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

16: Cf. Nabnitu xvi 64 (MSL xvi p.143) si₃₃-[a]₃₃: šī₃₃-pa₃₃-ku₃₃ šā-i₃₃-ki₃₃ 'to pile up a dike'.

18: This construction is commemorated in the name of Hammurapi's fourth year. Cf. for example mu₃₃-bād gā-gi₃₃-a gibil mu₃₃-[u]₃₃-dū₃₃ 'The year he built the wall of the new cloister', CT 8 18b. For a complete listing of the various examples of this year formula, see M. Horsnell, The Yearnames of the First Dynasty of Babylon (unpublished University of Toronto thesis, 1974) pp.171-3.

20: The šā-ba 'in its midst' presumably refers back to the flooded field not the wall of the cloister the immediate antecedent, since the latter would not make sense. This is supported by the fact that the canal Aya-hegal is described in an early Old
Babylonian source (RSO 2, p. 539.1) as running beside the plain $i$-$n$-$a$ $b$-$a$-$m$-$a$-$t$-$i$-$m$ $i$-$t$-$a$ n$â$ $â$.$a$.$â$-$h$-$é$-$g$-$â$.

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

23: Literally 'the water of abundance'.

34: Should we perhaps restore here [igi-ni] $â$h$é$-$e$n$-$ši$-$1$-[bar-re]?

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