

The Elamite tablets from Nineveh — It was suggested by F. Vallat in *NABU* 1988, note 39, that some Neo-Elamite tablets in the British Museum, whose apparent Nineveh provenance was already suspect because of their content, might be identical with ones described by J. de Morgan as found, probably by W.K. Loftus, at Malamir. The hypothesis was supported by D. Charpin in note 40. These notes were drawn to my attention by M. Stolper, and I have the impression that scholars of Elamite have accepted the suggestion. Nonetheless it is clearly wrong. It seems that Loftus did visit Malamir in 1850, as Layard had done before him, but that attractive valley is not the place where all these tablets were discovered.

Scholars have known, at least since the first volume of Bezold's catalogue appeared in 1889 and included well-known Nebuchadnezzar and Nabonidus cylinders from southern cities, that British Museum objects with K numbers did not necessarily derive from the Kuyunjik mound at Nineveh. The vast majority did, but not all ; exceptions are not necessarily identifiable. We are better informed about those tablets in Bezold's catalogue which have numbers incorporating the excavator's name, i.e. Sm[ith], R[assa]m, and Bu[dge] and/or the official date of acquisition, e.g. 48-7-20 (= 20 July 1848) ; the provenances of these collections are relatively reliable, and problems are limited. I summarized the situation in K. R. Veenhof (ed.), *Cuneiform Archives and Libraries* (1986) 213-4.

The details of the Elamite tablets, taken from F. H. Weissbach's basic publication (BA 4 [1902] 168-201) and from C. B. F. Walker (Iran 18 [1980] 79), are as follows :

Weissbach 1-7 (K 1325, K 4697, K 4713, K 6076, K 8224, K 12055, K 13790) : probably from Kuyunjik, excavated in 1850-1855 by A.H. Layard, H. Rassam, Loftus and others.

Weissbach 8-10 (Sm 691 + 1653, Sm 2144) from G. Smith's 1874 excavations at Nineveh, mainly in the South-West Palace.

Weissbach 11 (Rm 552) excavated at Nineveh or bought in Babylonia by Rassam in 1877-8.

Weissbach 12 (48-7-20, 118) excavated by Layard in 1847, very probably at Nineveh in the Room I area of the South-West Palace together with or close to six Babylonian letters whose content suggests a date early in the reign of Sin-šarru-iškun, i.e. around 625-620 BC (see Reade, in M. Fales [ed], *Assyrian Royal Inscriptions : New Horizons* [1981], 167, and S. Parpola, in Veenhof [op. cit.], 225, n. 15).

Weissbach 13 (81-2-4, 137) : excavated by Rassam at Nineveh in 1880.

Weissbach 14-20 (83-1-18, 307 + fragment, 480 + 821, 509, 706, 801, 803, 809) : excavated by Rassam at Nineveh in 1882, most probably in the Room LIV area of the South-West Palace, together with or close to groups of texts of which 93.9% of the datable pieces have been assigned by Parpola, in Veenhof (op. cit.), 228-9, to the reigns of Esarhaddon or Aššurbanipal i.e. around 680-630 BC.

Weissbach 21-5 (Bu 89-4-26, 15 and Bu 91-5-9, 24, 44 + 48, 91, 188) : excavated by W. Budge at Nineveh during 1889-1891, probably in the Room LIV area of the South-West Palace.

We cannot independently prove the provenances listed here, but they cannot all be mistaken. It is manifest that many of these Elamite tablets were excavated in the South-West Palace at Nineveh ; it seems highly likely that they all were. Where they were actually written is of course a different issue, as are their archival associations and historical context. For instance, like some of the political refugees at the Assyrian court, they may have originated in Elam. Similarly, we have no sure knowledge of their stratigraphic position and it may even be that they derive from a post-Assyrian, pre-Achaemenid level otherwise unattested at the site : certainly Nineveh became an enemy base, at least temporarily, after its fall in 612 BC. The natural suppositions, however, are that the tablets were found mixed together with the extensive Assyrian archives and that they had been written before the burning of the palace itself which presumably happened in that same year.

Incidentally, the presence of Elamites at the fall of Nineveh, whether resident or in the attacking forces, may be postulated from the selective defacement of sculptures in Room XXXIII of the same palace. These showed one of Assurbanipal's Elamite campaigns. Heavy blows have been directed at the two Assyrian soldiers responsible for killing the Elamite king Teumman and his son ; at the caption recording the installation of the pro-Assyrian Ummanigash as king of Madaktu ; at Ummanigash himself ; and at some of the leading Elamites welcoming him (Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran 9 [1976], Taf. 21-22). These are not the only instances of selective defacement in the Palace, and 612 BC is the date which seems to have offered the most natural opportunity for such activities.

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