

TEXTS OF THE
FOUNDATION STONE OF KHORSABAD.

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TRANSLATED BY
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BOTTA'S successor in the Khorsabad excavations, the late Victor Place, found in 1853, at the very interior part of the construction, a large stone chest, which enclosed several inscribed plates in various materials. In this only extant specimen of an Assyrian foundation stone were found one little golden tablet, one of silver, and others of copper, lead, and tin; a sixth text was engraved on alabaster, and the seventh document was written on the chest itself. Only four of these tablets have survived the disaster which caused the almost complete loss of the two French collections gathered by the Expedition to Mesopotamia, and by the Nineveh explorers. The lead tablet being too heavy had been sent with the *kelek* which foundered in the Tigris, and this fate was also reserved for the stone inscription and the enclosure case. By an unpardonable negligence, not even casts had been taken from the originals sent away with the

great bulk of huge sculptures ; they had been packed up and sent away when the author of this translation passed through Nineveh in March 1854. I therefore could not copy them like the Harem inscriptions, which are now only preserved by my copies of the inscriptions from the casts at Khorsabad.

This loss is the more to be regretted as these very tablets contain several expressions which are not repeated in similar texts ; moreover, one of those preserved, the copper document, is very far from being thoroughly legible ; a great deal of the text is destroyed by verdigris, but as besides that circumstance the parts which are not defaced contain merely repetitions of known passages, I have thought it not useful to reproduce it now.

Of the three foundation tablets which I give here two have already been translated in French in my *Dour-Sarkayan* ; the second, on silver, the most important one, has only been published with the text, transliteration, and Latin translation ; but there also the oxidation of the silver had rendered their reading most difficult, and the interpretation was hitherto rather faulty and defective. It is now for the first time properly translated into a European language.

GOLDEN TABLET.

PALACE of SARGON,¹ the Mandatary of BEL, the Lieutenant of ASSUR, the great King, the mighty King, King of the world, King of Assyria, who reigned from the two beginnings unto the two ends of the four celestial points;² he appointed satraps over the lands.

In these days I built, after my pleasure, a town near Nineveh, in the country which borders the mountains. I gave it the name of Dur-Sarkin.

I distributed in its interior temples to HEA, SIN, SAMAS,³ BEN, NINIP, the sculptures dedicated to their great divinity. HEA,⁴ builder of all edifices,⁵ had them made, and the people raised altars.

I constructed palaces covered with skin, sandal wood,

¹ The tablet is almost three inches long, and two inches wide; it weighs 2 gr. almost three drams, Troy, and has a value of £25.

² This passage signifies from East to West, and from South to North. It has not been remarked, I think, that the *an* represents the dual in the constructive case.

³ The sun.

⁴ God of all holy art.

⁵ This style is peculiar to this tablet, the others have the usual manner of rendering the sense.

ebony, cedar, tamarisk, pine, cypress, cypress *samal*, and wood of pistachio tree.

I made a spiral staircase in the interior of the doors, and I placed at the upper part joists of pine and of cypress.

On tablets of gold, silver, copper, lead, tin,¹ marble, and alabaster², I wrote the glory of my name, and I put them into the foundations.

¹ The tin is expressed by the ideogram A-BAR (*parakku*), which, I believe, is quite different from the Chaldaic. The word is expressed by the word *qizasaddir*, the Sanscrit *kastira*, the Greek *kassiteron*. The Assyrian word could be read "table-white-red," by decomposing it into monograms, but this seems to be merely fortuitous.

² As the case enclosing these tablets was of gypsum alabaster, this mineral is of course expressed by the ideogram TAK-IZ-SIR-GAL, "the stone of the great light." TAK-ZA-SAT is the "white stone," that is, "marble." M. Delitzsch has translated erroneously this ideogram by "crystal." M. Place did not mention formerly the marble tablet, which was found broken and probably thrown away; he recollected it only after my insisting upon the statement of the inscription. But this false account had caused me to commit a singular mistake, in translating in the beginning "marble" by "copper," and "alabaster" by "lead!"

With respect to the other materials mentioned in this text and in almost all Sargon inscriptions, I need not observe that some of them are by no means quite sure. What is, for instance, the sense of the *ka-am-si*, which is always put in the first place, before the different species of timber? It must be something more important than a merely ornamental substance, but is certainly a very necessary one. *Am-si* seems to be either "buffalo" or "boar," but there are also sea-*amsi*; and long since I believed the term to be identical with the biblical *takhash*, perhaps the skin of a *cetaceum*, as sealskin, or narvalskin, employed in Assyria as in Judæa. At any rate, it cannot possibly be "bull's horn" as Mr. Houghton supposed it to be; bull's horns never occupied a prominent position in the construction of palaces.

The inscribed chest was, according to M. Place, 0^m28, 0^m36, 0^m43, that is, 1 *U*, 1¹/₄ *U*, 1¹/₂ *U*, or ¹/₂, ⁵/₈ and ³/₄ of a cubit. That would speak against Professor Lepsius' division of a cubit into three double hands, and the hand into 5 fingers, and would rather agree with Smith's and my own division of the *U* into 60 parts. According to our reckoning, it would be, 60,

Whoever alters the works of my hand, whoever plunders my treasure, may ASSUR, the great Lord, exterminate in this country, his name and his race !

75 and 90 parts ; or, according to Dr. Lepsius, 15, $18\frac{3}{4}$ and $22\frac{1}{2}$ fingers. The calculation, of course, would be the same ; but in the system of Dr. Lepsius we ought to admit *fractions of the smallest division*, which does not seem admissible.



TABLET OF SILVER.

Palace of SARGON, the Mandatary of BEL, the Lieutenant of ASSUR, the mighty King, the King of Assyria, the King who reigned from the two beginnings unto the two ends of the four celestial points, who appointed satraps over the lands.

In these days, after the will of my heart, I made a town, in the neighbourhood of Nineveh, in the country which borders the mountains. I gave it the name of Dur-Sarkin. I chose in its interior dwellingplaces for HEA, SIN, SAMAS, BEN, NINIP, the great gods, my lords; I had the statues of their great divinities made finely, and I had the altars erected.

I made halls covered with (sea-calf) skins, with sandal wood, ebony, cedar, tamarisk, pine, cypress *samal*, wood of the pistachio tree, in the palace, and with a spiral staircase like those of Syria,¹ I adorned its doors. The beasts of the mountains, of the sea, of the river, very conspicuously I painted upon the vaults (*niplatti*).² Within them I laid deeply their entrances. The god SIN shone on the top and shadowed the battlements,³ and I disposed symmetrically in their doors beams of cedar and cypress, and doors of sandal wood and ebony.

I erected its⁴ mighty walls, like rocks of granite. I

¹ Hatti.

² This and the following passages, are peculiar to this inscription, which, unfortunately, is not in all parts very distinct. They have not been interpreted in my Latin version, and in some points the English one may be doubtful.

³ Possible, but not sure.

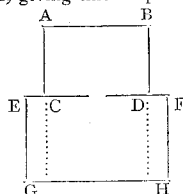
⁴ The palace's.

measured a surface of 10 aruras,¹ and surrounding it, I

¹ This statement of the silver tablet is of a highly important value. It is the sole passage giving directly a superficial calculation. The whole surface of the royal castle of Sargon is valuated at ten *aruras* (great *U*), and this capital statement affords us the clue to the very interesting system of Assyrian survey.

The castle represents a symmetrical rectangular octagon; six angles have 90° each, and the two others 270°. It is formed by two rectangles joined together, and, according to Place's measurements, giving this shape:

AB, N.W. front	. 237 metres, 259 yards
AC and BD	. . 151 " 165 "
EC and DF	. . 39 " 43 "
EG and FH	. . 191 " 209 "
GH, S.E. back side	. 316 " 346 "
Total depth (151+191)	342 " 374 "
Total circumference	. 1316 " 1439 "



All these figures can be expressed by exact numbers in Assyrian cubits and feet. Moreover, all the numbers of cubits are divisible by 12, and all the feet numbers by 20; we can therefore reduce the numbers to unities of double *sa*, fathoms (of 6 cubits each), which we shall name *pole*. We have therefore:

AB	. . . . . 432 cubits	720 feet	36 poles
AC and BD	. . . . . 276 "	460 "	23 "
EC and DF	. . . . . 72 "	120 "	6 "
EG and FH	. . . . . 348 "	580 "	29 "
GH	. . . . . 576 "	960 "	48 "
Total depth	. . . . . 624 "	1040 "	52 "
Total circumference	. 2400 "	4000 "	200 "

The circumference is just the double of 48 and 52, viz., 100 poles. The surface is altogether:

The smaller, the sculptural part, ABCD $36 \times 23 = 838$ square poles.

The larger part, out-house $48 \times 29 = 1392$ "

Total surface 2220 "

These 2220 square poles are equal to 319,680 square cubits, 888,000 square feet. That is also given by Place's statement of 9, 6 hectares, exactly $961^{\frac{2}{3}}$ 76, or 23 acres, three quarters, English.

We must remember here that the entire surface of the town of Khorsabad was an area of 9,000,000 and 555,000 square cubits. We have also here the element of 37; the additional town rectangle is to the castle as 125 to 72. Here also the *ell* of 37 Assyrian inches (3 feet plus 1 inch) enters into the calculation.

The great *U*, which we name *arura*, is therefore a surface of 96 acres, or

distributed in 180 *tiri*¹ its battlements.

almost 2 acres and 1 rood and a half. It is composed of 222 square poles, or the sum of three squares, one of 14 poles, another of 5 poles, and a third of 1 pole each side. ($14^2 + 5^2 + 1 = 222$.) The arura, equivalent to 31,968 square cubits, or 88,800 square feet, was therefore formed of an almost square-like rectangle of 296 feet, or 96 ells one side and 96 ells plus 4 feet the other side; that is, 300 feet. In the formation of this almost quadrate figure we have the great square of 96 ells, then three smaller regular squares, each side of which is 32, 12, and 4 feet, viz.:

Great square of 96 ells, 296 feet	. 87616 square feet
Small square of 32 feet	. . . 1024 "
" " 12 "	. . . 144 "
" " 4 "	. . . 16 "
Total of the arura	. . 88800 "

The construction of Khorsabad offered another problem to be resolved. The circumference ought to be 200 poles, and the surface 10 aruras. The Assyrian engineers took formerly the large back side of 48 poles, and then they fixed the monumental front at 36 poles. To gain a circumference of 200 poles, they ought to give to the entire edifice the depth of 52 (100 - 48) poles. The question was how to divide 52 into two unequal parts, as to obtain for the whole surface 2220 square poles. To that purpose they calculated first the central diagram, $36 \times 52 = 1872$, and divided the remainder, 348, into 12 (48 - 36) parts; they added therefore on both sides a rectangle, each 6 wide and 29 long. This is the geometrical resolution of the equation which we to-day would form algebraically:

$$\begin{array}{r}
 x + y = 52, \quad 48x + 36y = 2220 \\
 \text{consequently: } \quad 36x + 36y = 1872 \\
 \hline
 12x \quad = 348 \\
 x \quad = 29 \\
 y \quad = 23
 \end{array}$$

As all the measures are to be verified by Place's measurements, undertaken of course without any arithmetical predilection, they finally decide the matter, and they speak against the opinions of Dr. Lepsius. As all the figures, and especially the last, 1316^m, correspond to a round number, the values obtained by the statements of this text, are entirely confirmed by the ruins themselves. It is in English measures:

1 Assyrian inch	1.0797 inches	1 Assyrian cubit	21.5944 inches
1 " span	10.7972 "	1 " fathom	129.5666 "
1 " foot	12.9567 "	1 " pole	259.1333 "

¹ The word *tiri* is obscure, perhaps the number of rooms enclosed in the palace. Ordinarily the word *tahlub* signifies the uppermost part of edifices. The text is very badly rendered in my *Dour-Sarkayan*; it runs thus: 10 *Urabuti uhabbir-va eli 3 a-an us tiri tahlubi-sumu aksur*.

I wrote on tablets of gold, silver, copper, tin, lead, marble, and alabaster, the glory of my name, and I put them into the foundations.

May the King who will succeed me restore (this palace) if it falls into ruins, may he write his tablets, may he place them aside of my tablets.

Then ASSUR will listen to his prayers. Whosoever alters the works of my hand, whoever plunders my treasures, may ASSUR, the great lord, exterminate in this country his name and his race !



TIN TABLET.

Palace of SARGON,¹ Mandatary of BEL, Lieutenant of ASSUR, the great King, the mighty King, King of the legions, King of Assyria, the King who governed from the two beginnings unto the two ends of the four celestial points, he appointed satraps over the lands.

In these days I built, after my good pleasure, in the country which borders the mountains, near Nineveh, a town. I gave it the name of Dur-Sarkin. I chose places for the dwellings of the gods SIN, SAMAS, BEN, NINIP.

I built palaces covered with skin, sandal wood, ebony, tamarisk, cedar, cypress.

On tablets of gold, silver, copper, lead, tin, marble, and alabaster, I have written the glory of my name, and I have put them into the foundations.

May the King who will succeed me, re-establish this palace, if it will fall into ruins, may he write his tablets, and place them aside of mine. Then ASSUR will grant his prayer!

¹ This tablet is pretty well preserved; but the tin has been entirely oxydised, and could only be acknowledged as such by the late Duc de Luynes, who also found some traces of antimony in the material. The tablet is small; therefore it may be presumed that the matter was considered as rather precious.

The text does not offer any subject for discussion; the only result of it was to make known the value of the ideogram *nu-ap*, which is here replaced by the word *patesi*, "vicar;" it was the title of the early Assyrian princes.

END OF SAMPLE TEXT



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