

Abhandlung

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Neo-Assyrian Royal Monuments from Lake Zeribar in Western Iran

A Stele of Sargon II and a Rock Relief of Shalmaneser III

<https://doi.org/10.1515/za-2020-0007>

From the testimony of his inscriptions, Sargon II of Assyria (r. 721–705 BC) is known to have routinely erected monuments during his military campaigns in Western Iran.¹ Two of these artefacts have been recovered in modern times, namely the Najafabad Stele² and the Tang-i Var Rock Relief.³ This paper primarily serves to publish a third such monument, which comes from the region of Lake Zeribar (also Zrebar, Zarivar, Zrewar, or Zeribor), the largest freshwater lake in the Zagros mountains.⁴

Alas, all that is left of this new royal stele is a badly worn fragment of its front surface, with the remains of a few lines of cuneiform inscription (Fig. 1). The irregularly shaped block weighs 12.08 kg and its maximum preserved dimensions are 30 cm in height, 22 cm in width and 12.5 cm in depth. The one surviving original surface measures 16 × 29 cm at its maximum extent and bears the remains of a cuneiform inscription; none of the original edges of the monument have been preserved. Judging from its schistose surface structure, the stele fragment consists of metamorphic rock, probably a schist of a greenschist facies assemblage and perhaps a low-grade phyllite.⁵ Green-

schist occurs locally in the region⁶ and is frequently used as a building material, in particular for drystone walls. The material is relatively soft and breaks very easily along its natural foliation, which also explains our piece's poor state of conservation. Since reaching the Archaeological Museum of Sanandaj in 2015, another small chip has come off and is now kept together with the main part of the fragment in a padded box to prevent further disintegration.

The piece came to light in spring 2015 when a team of archaeologists from Tehran University led by Dr Hassan Karimian conducted archaeological excavations at Qal'eh-i Imam, near the modern city of Marivan. At that time, one of the workers, Mr Naseh Sedeiqi, brought the piece to the team's attention, correctly assuming that it was of historical importance, and team member Kazem Omidī convinced him to donate it to the Archaeological Museum of Sanandaj.

The tiny text fragment does not much further our knowledge about the activities of the Assyrians in the Zagros mountains. But as we shall see, what little remains of its inelegantly executed and poorly preserved cuneiform inscription is nevertheless sufficient to attribute the stele to one of the Assyrian rulers with great certainty. However, already its place of origin lends the fragment great significance: Lake Zeribar is, to the Assyrian mind, the “Sea of Inner Mazamua” (*tâmtu ša Mazamua ša bētāni*),⁷ a designation used only in the inscriptions of Shalmaneser III (r. 858–824 BC), who recorded among his most glorious achievements a naval battle that his army fought on the lake, which pitted Assyrian leather coracles against local reed boats (reed being in generous supply along Lake

1 See Radner (2003 a, 119 f.) for Sargon's erection of monuments in Iran according to the testimony of his inscriptions; Frame (2006, 51–58) for a catalogue and discussion of all surviving steles and rock reliefs of Sargon from outside the Assyrian heartland (many very fragmentary).

2 RINAP 2, no. 117; now on display in the National Museum of Tehran.

3 RINAP 2, no. 116; a life-sized copy based on 3D scans is presently on display in the Archaeological Museum of Sanandaj.

4 Wasylikowa/Witkowski 2008.

5 According to the assessment of Cajetan Geiger (University of Bochum) on the basis of photographs provided by Karen Radner; personal communication (2 January 2020).

6 For a photograph of a schist outcrop close to nearby Gird-i Rostam see Potts [e. a.] 2018–19, 112 Fig. 22.

7 RIMA 2, no. A.O.102.23: 18: *tam-di ša KUR-za-mu-a ša be-ta-ni* (new edition: Radner 2009, 179–183; Tigris 2); no. A.O.102.29: 39–40: *tam-[di ša KUR-za-mu-a] ša bi-ta-ni*; discussed by Yamada (2005, 43. 49 with n. 59. 53 Table 4). Although the toponym is often realised as *Zamua in the secondary literature, the spellings with initial *ma-* make it clear that it is Mazamua (see Radner 2017, 211).

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Fig. 1: Greenschist block from an inscribed Assyrian stele from Qal'eh-i Iman, now at the Archaeological Museum of Sanandaj. Photograph by Karen Radner.

Zeribar's shores; Fig. 2).⁸ Whatever the local name for this body of water was at the time is not known to us.

We will first discuss the stele fragment and its inscription, proposing an attribution to Sargon II of Assyria, before turning to questions concerning the local geography, arguing that the region of Lake Zeribar should be assigned to the territory of the Assyrian province of Parsua (or Parsuaš; established 744 BC) rather than Mazamua (established 842 BC). At the end of this paper, we will present another fragmentary Assyrian monument, which can likely be interpreted as part of a rock relief showing Shalmaneser III of Assyria.

Since its discovery in 2015, the stele fragment from Qal'eh-i Iman has been kept at the Archaeological Museum of Sanandaj (Kurdistan Province). It was brought to Karen Radner's attention in November 2019 by Mohammad Masoumian, a member of the Tehran University team exploring Qal'eh-i Iman under the direction of Hassan Karimian, during an International Conference on the Iron Age in Western Iran and Neighbouring Regions held at the University of Kurdistan in Sanandaj, the capital of Iran's

⁸ RIMA 3, no. A.0.102.2 ii 75–78 and parallels; discussed in detail by Potts (forthcoming).

Kurdistan Province. Radner was able to study, sketch and photograph the piece on 4 November 2019 in the Archaeological Museum of Sanandaj, under the kind guidance of its director Eghbal Azizi.⁹

On that same day, Masoumian and Radner also met in Marivan (35.527 N, 46.176 E), located 130 kilometres west of the provincial capital of Sanandaj and very close to the border with Sulaymaniyah Province in the Kurdish Autonomous Region of Iraq, with the nearest border crossing at the city of Penjwin connected by road a distance of just under 30 km. We had the opportunity to visit the nearby ruins of Qal'eh-i Imam (Fig. 3), where the fragment had been found: it originates from a drystone wall enclosing one of the buildings of the village Barqaleh (35.488 N, 46.180 E) that partially occupies the old structures of the now ruined, extended military fortification, known today as Qal'eh-i Imam “Castle of the Imam” or Qal'eh-i Marivan “Fortress of Marivan”, originally the name of the region around Lake Zarivar in what is today the westernmost part of Iran's Kurdistan Province.

The ruins cover an area of more than 100 hectares¹⁰ on and around an arrow-shaped mountain range known as Qoleh Imam “Mountain of the Imam” whose three peaks lend it the alternative name Se Qoleh “Three summits” (Touari 1992), with the highest elevation at the tip of the arrow reaching an altitude of 1670 m above sea level. Barqaleh lies on the southern, outer slopes of this part of the mountain (Fig. 4). The ruin field also includes the sheltered lower-lying areas inside the arrow-shape of the mountain, which are well protected against the swampy expanse of Lake Zeribar. Both the mountain and the castle are said to owe their names to a prominent local sheikh who had been appointed by the Baban Dynasty to lead the Friday Prayer. During the time of Ottoman rule over Iraq and Safavid rule over Iran, the region of Marivan was much contested by the local Kurdish principalities of Baban (centred on Kirkuk and later Sulaymaniyah)

⁹ In addition to the staff of the Archaeological Museum of Sanandaj, Karen Radner also wishes to thank Kozad Ahmed (University of Sulaymaniyah), Helen Gries (Vorderasiatisches Museum Berlin), Zahra Hashemi (Université Paris 1 – Panthéon-Sorbonne) and Janoscha Kreppner (University of Münster) for their company and assistance during that occasion. Many thanks are also due to Grant Frame (University of Philadelphia) for access to his edition of the inscriptions of Sargon II ahead of its publication, to Cajetan Geiger (University of Bochum) for advice on geological matters, to Jamie Novotny (LMU Munich) for reading and commenting on a draft of this paper, to Dan Potts (New York University) for sharing his forthcoming paper on Lake Zeribar, and to Andrea Squitieri (LMU Munich) for preparing the map at short notice.

¹⁰ Cf. Karimian [e. a.] 2014; Karimian/Masoumian 2017.



Fig. 2: View of the ample reed belts hugging the shores of Lake Zeribar (4 November 2019). Photograph by Karen Radner.

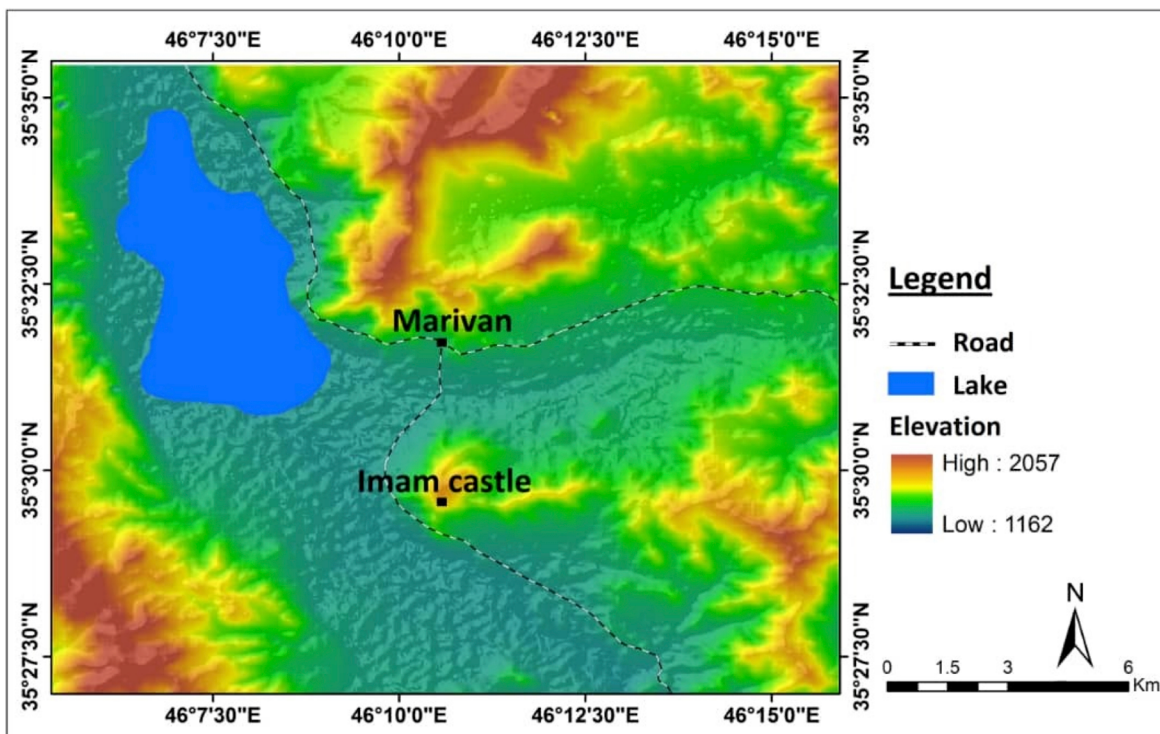


Fig. 3: The position of Lake Zeribar, Marivan and Qal'eh-i Iman. Map provided by Mahommad Masoumian, courtesy Qal'eh-i Iman excavation project.



Fig. 4: View of Kuh Imam, with the arrow indicating the position of the village of Barqaleh on the southern shoulder of the mountain range. Image provided by Mahommad Masoumian, courtesy Qal'eh-i Imam excavation project.

and Ardalan (centred on Sanandaj/ancient Sena). After the fortress of Qal'eh-i Imam was constructed under the Ardalan Dynasty in 1519 AD, it played an important strategic and political role in these conflicts. Once Naser al-Din (Nasreddin) Shah of the Qajar Dynasty, king of Persia from 1848 to 1896, had conquered the principality of Ardalan, the fortifications fell into disrepair.

The ruins of Qal'eh-i Imam are situated at a close distance from its successor settlement, the district capital of Marivan. However, the modern city extends into the fertile plain directly on the southeastern shore of Lake Zeribar, at an altitude of 1340 m above sea level. This position would have seemed very unwise to the ancient inhabitants of the region as the extent of the lake is known to fluctuate, which may eventually endanger the modern settlement although the water level is comparatively low in recorded modern times (Wasylikowa/Witkowski 2008).

Due to the numerous extant parallels from the Neo-Assyrian period,¹¹ we can safely reconstruct the original monument as an ashlar-shaped stele in portrait format with a height of ca. 2 m and a width of about 70 cm,

rounded at the top according to the stylistic conventions of the time. Given the block's dimensions, the stele was at the very least 25 cm deep. The side with the cuneiform text comes from the front surface of the stele, which was decorated with the inscription and originally also a depiction of the king who commissioned the monument; but of that depiction, nothing survives on the small fragment. The stone mason fashioned the stele in such a way that the front surface runs at an obtuse angle to the rock's foliation. This was presumably done purposefully to achieve a smooth surface for the inscription and the image.

Since its creation, however, the stele disintegrated, breaking naturally and multiple times along the greenschist's layering. Our piece is very likely just one of many similarly sized fragments. If any other of these have survived they are surely to be found in the ruin area of Qal'eh-i Imam. Such pieces may well have ended up in secondary position as building material for other drystone walls. However, as the fragmentary inscription or parts of the royal image would not necessarily form the visible face on such additional pieces they would be difficult to spot among the other pieces of local greenschist used for building. We, therefore, cannot have much confidence that further finds will add to the meagre remains of the Neo-Assyrian stele and its cuneiform inscription.

¹¹ The majority of the extant steles are conveniently collected by Börker-Klähn (1982).

Although the inscription survives only as a small and badly worn text fragment the piece at the Archaeological Museum of Sanandaj can nevertheless be attributed to a particular Assyrian king. The discussed prominence of Lake Zeribar in the royal inscriptions of Shalmaneser III may already suggest that the stele was commissioned by that ruler, especially as the victory in the naval battle fought on the lake in 853 BC provides a persuasive reason for fashioning a monument to commemorate this deed. Shalmaneser also had a demonstrated habit of marking his visits to prominent bodies of water, where he ceremonially cleansed his weapons and conducted other activities of ritual significance, with the erection of royal monuments (cf. Yamada 2000, 294 f. 297–299). Moreover, the writing of some of Shalmaneser's inscriptions is relatively inelegantly executed, with one of his rock inscriptions at the assumed source of the Tigris at Birkleyn (which happens to mention the Sea of Inner Mazamua) providing a convenient example (Radner 2009, 179–183: Tigris 2).

However, close study of the few remaining fragmentary lines (Fig. 5) reveals that the stele is more likely to be a product of the reign of Sargon II of Assyria. The first clue is the mention of the toponym Harhar, which plays an important role in Sargon's eastern campaigns and also served as the capital of a new Assyrian province that he founded in 716 BC (with the new name Kar-Šarrukin, meaning “Harbour of Sargon”). Crucially, the place is not attested in the inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser III (r. 744–727 BC) (Radner 2003 b, 49). Our text prefixes the toponym Harhar with the determinative KUR (for a region), whereas Sargon's inscriptions otherwise use the determinative URU (for a city); however, Harhar is attested elsewhere in the Neo-Assyrian text corpus with the determinative KUR, notably in the inscriptions of Shalmaneser III¹² and Adad-nerari III (r. 810–783 BC).¹³ While the mention of Harhar with the determinative KUR (although with another spelling than the one attested in our fragment) could be used in support of an attribution to Shalmaneser III, the second clue is a turn of phrase that is typical of Sargon's inscriptions¹⁴ but not at all attested among the texts of his predecessors and successors: *ardu kanšu šādīd nīriya/nīr Aššur bēliya* “submissive servant who carries my/my lord Aššur's yoke”. Therefore, we should identify Sargon II, rather than Shalmaneser III, as the king in whose honour the stele was erected.¹⁵

¹² RIMA 3, no. A.O.102.14: 121: *KURḥar-ḥa-ar*.

¹³ RIMA 3, no. A.O.104.8: 6: *KURḥar-ḥar*.

¹⁴ RINAP 2, no. 7: 36 (referring to Iranzu of Mannea). 70. 117; no. 74: 43; no. 82: 61' (all referring to Daltâ of Ellipi).

¹⁵ Grant Frame accepted this attribution and included the piece as no. 115 in his forthcoming edition of all known inscriptions of Sargon II (RINAP 2).

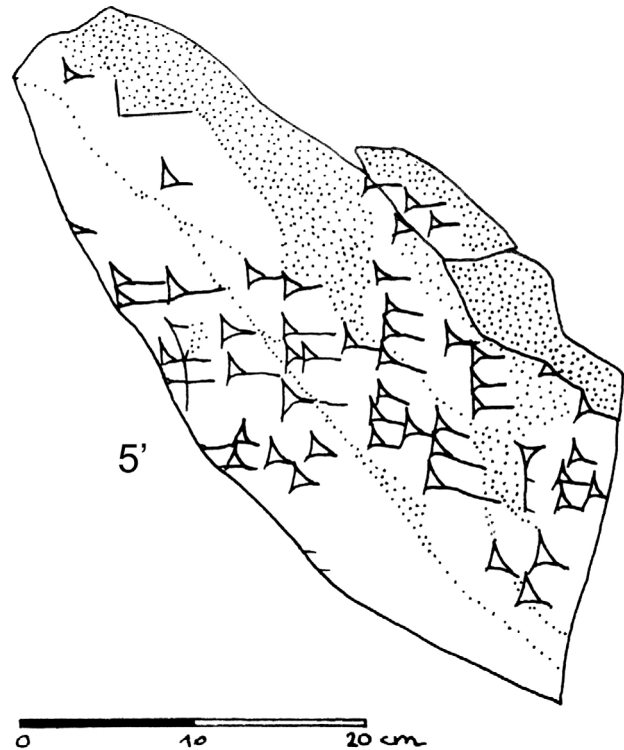


Fig. 5: The fragmentary inscription on the stele fragment from Qal'eh-i Iman. Drawing by Karen Radner.

- 1'–3' Clear traces of cuneiform but illegible.
 4' [... ar-d]i kan-še 'ša¹-d[i-id nīriya / nīr Aššur bēliya ...]
 5' [... LUGAL ^{KUR}e-li-p]i ^{KUR}ḥar-ḥ[ar ...]
 Alternative reading: [... i-na šÀ-b]i ^{KUR}ḥar-ḥ[ar ...]
 6' [...] KUR[...]

In the present context, it is likely that the mention of a submissive servant (here in the genitive) refers to Sargon's vassal Daltâ, king of the Western Iranian principality of Ellipi, which may be mentioned in the beginning of the penultimate line preserved on our fragment. Not only is Daltâ described in several inscriptions as Sargon's submissive servant who carries his or Aššur's yoke;¹⁶ prior to the Assyrian annexation of their territory, the people of Harhar had turned to Daltâ as their political leader after having disposed of their own city-lord Kibaba.¹⁷ Our passage likely refers to these events although none of the known inscriptions provide an exact parallel.

Where in the holdings of the Assyrian Empire under Sargon II was our stele set up? Vital information can be

¹⁶ RINAP 2, no. 7: 70. 117; no. 74: 43; no. 82: 61'.

¹⁷ RINAP 2, no. 1: 96–97; no. 2: 89–90; no. 72: A8'–9'; no. 82: iii 26'–27'.

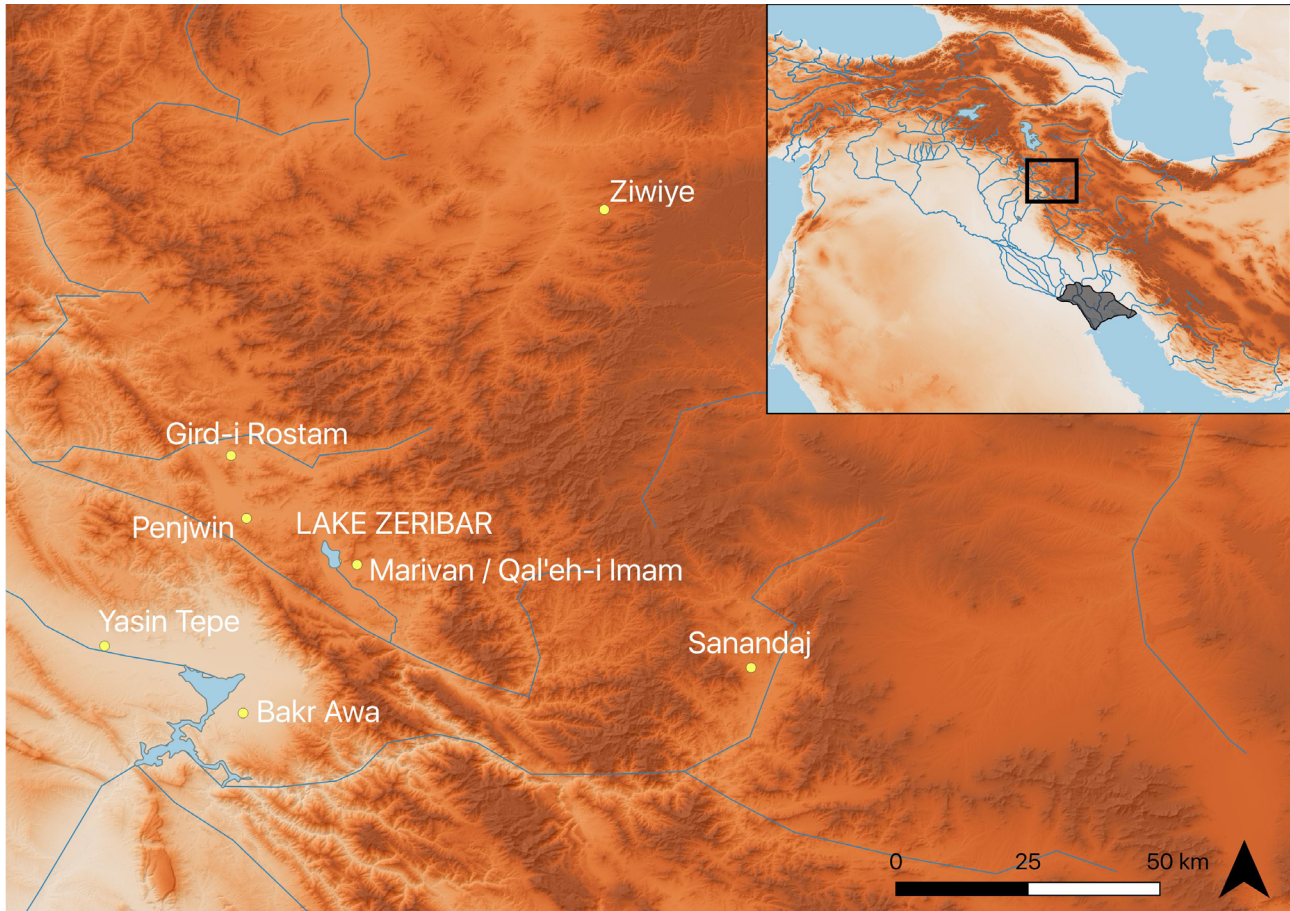


Fig. 6: Map indicating the archaeological sites discussed in this chapter. Prepared by Andrea Squitieri.

gathered from the so-called Mazamua Itinerary (a modern designation), an undated archival text that was with great certainty composed during the reign of Sargon II.¹⁸ It lists the stages of an eighteen-day journey from the Assyrian heartland to Lake Zeribar, and the last stretch of the journey leads from Birtu-ša-Adad-remanni to Dur-Tukulti-apil-Ešarra and on to the “Sea”; in the region in question, this can only refer to the body of water called “Sea of Inner Mazamua” in the inscriptions of Shalmaneser III, that is Lake Zeribar.¹⁹

Before arriving at the lake, the last station in the Mazamua Itinerary that can be located with any reasonable confidence is Dur-Aššur (reached on Day 14). Without any doubt, this city is situated in the Assyrian province of Mazamua (established in 842 BC by Shalmaneser III)²⁰ and lies in the Shahrizor Plain, which is traversed by the Tanjero river, a tributary of the Diyala/Sirwan. The city

received the name “Fortress of Aššur” from Ashurnasirpal II (r. 882–859 BC) who replaced its original name of Atlila with this patriotic Assyrian designation.²¹ Dur-Aššur most likely corresponds to the massive settlement mound of Yasin Tepe (Fig. 6), located near the modern town of Arbat, in whose lower town a Japanese team led by Shin’ichi Nishiyama (Chubu University) took up excavation in 2016 and has since begun unearthing a major Neo-Assyrian elite residence with a richly furnished, unlooted underground tomb;²² these impressive finds make the alternative identification with the site of Bakr Awa near Halabja less likely.²³

While the route of the Mazamua Itinerary becomes unclear as soon as it leaves Dur-Aššur, it certainly took the

¹⁸ Edition and discussion: Levine 1989.

¹⁹ Levine (1989, 88); cf. also Potts (forthcoming).

²⁰ Radner in Altaweel [e. a.] 2012, 12–14.

²¹ RIMA 2, no. A.0.101.1 ii 84–86.

²² Cf. Nishiyama [e. a.] 2018. For a photo of the entrance to the tomb see Abdullah [e. a.] 2019, 22 Fig. 16.

²³ Cf., e. g., Radner (in Altaweel [e. a.] 2012, 14) for the view that Dur-Aššur is to be identified with Bakr Awa. Already revised by Radner (2017, 212).

traveller across the Shar Bazhêr high plateau (Edmonds 1957), and quite possibly to the Shalar river (also known as Chami Tatan), a tributary of the Lower Zab. There, at the undisturbed multi-period settlement mound of Gird-i Rostam (35.753 N, 45.915 E) in the agricultural lands of the village of Bistan near the modern town of Garmik, excavations undertaken since 2018 under the direction of Daniel T. Potts and Karen Radner have brought to light substantial fortification architecture and material remains dating to the Neo-Assyrian period.²⁴ In particular, the fragmentary inscription on the sherd of a ceramic wine drinking bowl²⁵ might mention Birtu-ša-Adad-remanni “Fort Adad-remanni”²⁶ (reached in the Mazamua Itinerary on Day 17), an Assyrian foundation that by the time of Ashurbanipal (r. 668–ca. 631 BC) had fallen under Mannean control.²⁷

The next stage of the Mazamua Itinerary, reached on the same day as Birtu-ša-Adad-remanni and constituting Day 17’s final stop, is Dur-Tukulti-apil-Ešarra “Tiglath-pileser’s Fortress”. Therefore, this place must be sought at only a short distance from Birtu-ša-Adad-remanni. The city’s name refers to the third Assyrian king of that name who had extensively campaigned in the region and established two provinces in the Zagros (Parsua and Bit-Humban, both founded in 744 BC; Radner 2003 b, 44–50). According to one of the inscriptions decorating his palace in Kalhu, Tiglath-pileser III received the tribute of Iranzu of Mannea in 744 BC at Dur-Tukulti-apil-Ešarra (RINAP 1, no. 47 o. 40) whereas the parallel passage on the Iran Stele, which was written at an earlier date, locates this same event “in the city of Sumbi, which is next to Assyria”.²⁸

²⁴ For the 2018 results see Potts [e. a.] 2018–19. The report of the 2019 results is in preparation.

²⁵ Radner (forthcoming). The fragmentary two-line inscription can be reconstructed as either [(DU)GÚ.ZI GEŠT]IN *an-nu-u š[á]* (2) [EN-URU ŠÁ URUHAL.ŠU-m]dIŠKUR-[*rém-a-ni*] “This wi[ne drinking bowl] belongs to [the city lord of Fort] Adad-[remanni]” or as [RN (DU)GÚ.ZI GEŠT]IN *an-nu-u š[á-ri-ik ta-din]* (2) [(ŠÁ) EN-URU ŠÁ URUHAL.ŠU-m]dIŠKUR-[*rém-a-ni*] “[RN gave] this wi[ne drinking bowl as a] gi[ft]. Belonging to the city lord of Fort] Adad-[remanni].” RN = royal name, with the vessel type, a carinated bowl, suggesting Sargon II or one of his successors.

²⁶ On the general location of Fort Adad-remanni see Reade (2001, 77) and Radner (2016, 19 f.).

²⁷ According to the epigraph on a relief from Ashurbanipal’s throne room which describes URUHAL.ŠU-m]dIŠKUR-*rém-a-ni* as a Mannean fortress (RINAP 5/1, no. 24: 1) whereas it is clearly under Assyrian control in the Mazamua Itinerary (r. 38: [(URU)HAL.ŠU-š]a-m]dIŠKUR-*rém-a-ni*) and in a letter from the correspondence of Sargon II (SAA 5, 162: 7: URUBIR-te-ša-m]10-*rém-a-ni*).

²⁸ RINAP 1, no. 35 i 17’: *a-na¹ URUSU-um-bi¹ [i-te]-e¹ KUR-aš-šur^{ki}*.

Therefore, Dur-Tukulti-apil-Ešarra/Sumbi was located on the Assyrian border with Mannea and apparently part of the latter’s territory before Tiglath-pileser annexed and renamed it in his honour, presumably to commemorate the triumph of his 744 BC campaign in the Zagros mountains which ended there. Just like Birtu-ša-Adad-remanni, the city is situated in the mountainous border region between the Assyrian lands and Mannea that changed hands repeatedly between the two powers in the 8th and 7th centuries BC. Sumbi is also attested in a letter from the correspondence of Sargon II with Šarru-emuranni, his governor of Mazamua (and year eponym of 712 BC), concerning a planned military march from Mazamua to the province of Bit-Humban which required the governor and his troops to “go up to the country of Sumbi”.²⁹ This indicates that Dur-Tukulti-apil-Ešarra/Sumbi lies not in the province of Mazamua but in the adjoining province of Parsua, which in its west and south bordered onto the fellow Assyrian provinces of Mazamua and Bit-Humban, respectively, while Mannea took up the neighbouring regions to its north and east.³⁰

Sumbi’s location on the border between Mazamua and Parsua is confirmed in Sargon’s Letter to Aššur (today better known as Sargon’s Eighth Campaign), according to which he approached from Mazamua to assemble the troops for his 714 BC campaign in Sumbi: “I held a review of my army in the district of the land of Sumbi and checked the number of horses and chariots” (RINAP 2, no. 65: 12).³¹ Instead of heading to Lake Zeribar, he then advances through the mountains, apparently following the route up the Shalar river which leads to a pass that constitutes the modern border crossing between Iraq and Iran, descending down to meet the route connecting Marivan with the modern city of Saqqez. This matches Sargon’s account well, which sees him “go down to the land Parsuaš” (line 38), where he receives militarily useful tribute in the form of horses and mules as well as edible livestock (cattle, sheep and goats) from the regional rulers (line 41), before leaving Parsua – and the Assyrian provincial system – for the district of Messi in Mannea and the hospitality of his client Ullusunu (line 51). Messi was famous for the horses that bear the region’s name and perhaps its centre – likely

²⁹ SAA 5, 200: 15–16: *al-lak e-¹li¹ (16) ¹a-na¹ KURsu-um-bi*.

³⁰ That the neighbouring regions of Parsua are Mazamua, Bit-Humban and Mannea is explicitly stated in a letter from Sargon’s correspondence, dealing with deportees from Tabal in Anatolia who had ran away from their placement in Parsua: SAA 15, 54 r. 1–2.

³¹ RINAP 2, no. 65: 12: *KURsu-um-bi*; the statement is repeated in abbreviated form at the close of the narrative in line 418. The logistics behind this are discussed by Marriott/Radner (2015, 129 f.).

the fortress of Sirdakka/Zirdiakka where Ullusunu receives the Assyrian king – should be identified with the hilltop fortress of Ziwiye, a rich (if poorly excavated) archaeological site near Saqqez (Hassanzadeh/Curtis 2018, 170 f.). In contrast to the gracious king of Mannea, who was long familiar with his obligations towards the Assyrian Empire, two local city-rulers came for the first time into contact with that power according to Sargon's report (line 73), who was pleased to receive them as vassals and placed them under the authority of the governor of Parsua, this being the closest Assyrian province.

The province of Parsua was established by Tiglath-pileser III as an Assyrian foothold in the Zagros mountains in 744 BC, at the same time as the province of Bit-Humban was created in the region of Kermanshah (Reade 1978, 138 f.). While the location of its capital Nikkur is still unknown (Radner 2003 b: 57), our previous discussions (cf. also Zadok 2001) suggest that the province of Parsua extended from the region of Sanandaj in the east (corresponding very broadly to the northeastern headwater region of the Diyala/Sirwan) to the area of Penjwin and Marivan in the west. The chance discovery of an Iron Age cemetery, which was unearthed in 2008 during the construction of a road in the Zagros Town district in the outskirts of Sanandaj, has shed light on life and death in the Assyrian province of Parsua, especially as three of the richer burials contain many objects that are typical for Assyrian imperial elite culture, including cylinder seals, fibulae and wine-drinking vessels;³² these three graves have been preserved and are now on display in the Archaeological Museum of Sanandaj.³³

If Gird-i Rostam is indeed to be identified Birtu-ša-Adad-remanni, then the Mazamua Itinerary's route to Lake Zeribar would have led south to the Qizilja river, another tributary of the Lower Zab which runs south and parallel to the Shalar (before the two merge to form the Siwail river, which in turn unites with the Gogasur to form the Qalachuwan river, and this tributary eventually joins the Lower Zab near the Peshdar Plain³⁴). Here lies the modern city of Penjwin, which features an impressive but badly destroyed multi-period settlement mound, and this may well have been the site of Dur-Tukulti-apil-Ešarra/Sumbi. From there, the route to the Sea of Inner Mazamua would have matched that taken by the modern road that links Penjwin with Marivan. Be that as it may, after the cre-

ation of the province of Parsua, the Sea of Inner Mazamua was situated in the territory of that province – despite its 9th century name that suggests a location in Mazamua. But it is worth remembering that the extent of the Assyrian province of Mazamua, as established in 842 BC, did not match that of all the territories described as being part of Mazamua in the inscriptions of Ashurnasirpal II and Shalmaneser III. The lands of that province were much more modest and concentrated on the Shahrizor plain, and when the new province of Parsua was established in 744 BC its territory included regions that would have been described as Mazamuan in the early 9th century.

In conclusion, contrary to the initial assumption that the fragment would belong to a monument commissioned by Shalmaneser III, the greenschist fragment from Qal'eh-i Imam can be shown to be part of a royal stele set up by Sargon II near Lake Zeribar in the territory of the Assyrian province of Parsua. Because the inscription details an episode involving Daltâ of Ellipi and the city of Harhar and, therefore, deals with events known to have come to a conclusion in 716 BC, with the annexation of Harhar as the centre of a new province, it is most probable that the stele was erected in that same year. Perhaps the monument was set up specifically in order to commemorate that Sargon added several cities, which had hitherto been controlled by client rulers who had turned out to be unworthy of the Assyrian ruler's trust, to the territory of the province of Parsua.³⁵ It is likely for this reason that Sargon's royal titulary included Parsua among his conquests: "Whose great hand conquered (the area) from the land of Hašmar to the land of Šimaš – which borders on the land of the distant Medes in the east – the lands of Namri, Ellipi, Bit-Humban, Parsua, Mannea, Urartu, Kasku (and) Tabal, as far as the land Musku."³⁶

But while the greenschist block belongs to a stele of Sargon II, it turns out that his ancestor Shalmaneser III also left a monument at Lake Zeribar as the rich store-rooms of the Archaeological Museum of Sanandaj contain another fragment of a Neo-Assyrian sculpture. According to its director Eghbal Azizi, this is another recent chance find from the Marivan region, specifically the eastern face of the Hawraman (also Hewrman and Uraman) mountain range, which separates the plain from the area of Said Sadiq and Khurmali in Sulaymaniyah Province. The block was confiscated and brought to the museum by a local member of the Antiquity Service in 2012.

³² Published by Amelirad [e. a.] (2012, grave goods) and Soltysiak [e. a.] (2018, human remains).

³³ Cf. Soltysiak [e. a.] 2018, 82 Fig. 1.

³⁴ For the complex hydrography and nomenclature of the Lower Zab's system of tributaries see Edmonds (1957).

³⁵ RINAP 2, no. 1: 93; no. 4: 39; no. 7: 58; cf. Radner 2003 b, 50.

³⁶ RINAP 2, no. 43: 14–15; fragmentary parallels: no. 1: 10–11; no. 105 i' 8'–11'.

The limestone block was once part of the top half of a rock relief showing the Assyrian king facing left with two divine symbols (horned crown; mace) behind the king's head and traces of another (winged sun disk) in the front of the king's head; there were likely more but these are now lost (Fig. 7). The shape of the block shows that the image was originally carved into a cliff face in the typical shape of a royal stele, as indicated by the rounded curve worked into the upper right of the stone block. That this is a fragment of a rock relief rather than of a freestanding stele is clear because the surface outside of the curve is very uneven and also preserved to a much greater width than typically used for the frames surrounding the royal figure on a stele. How and when the stone was broken out of its original setting is not known, as the piece was confiscated from parties who had intended to sell it illegally and who did not disclose any further information; the precise original location of the monument is not known either. We can safely assume that the forceful process of breaking the surviving part of the relief out of the rock would have caused the destruction of the rest of the monument. Whether the relief was originally associated with a cuneiform inscription or not remains unknown; the surviving block does not bear any traces of writing.



Fig. 7: Fragment of a limestone rock relief from the eastern face of the Hawraman range, with a partially preserved depiction of an Assyrian king, now at the Archaeological Museum of Sanandaj. Photograph by Karen Radner.

When oriented correctly, the block has a maximum preserved height of 23 cm and a maximum preserved width of 26 cm, with a maximum preserved depth of 9 cm. The depiction of the king is therefore significantly under life-

size. It is executed in relatively deep relief of a depth of just under 1 cm and shows the left-facing king raising his right hand in the typical gesture of prayer while holding a mace in the left hand. Given the strong resemblance of the royal figure, also in scale and execution, with the two depictions of Shalmaneser on his rock reliefs at Birkleyn (“Tigris Grotto”)³⁷ we would suggest that the limestone block originates from a monument that this same Assyrian ruler had carved into the mountains facing Lake Zeribar where he achieved a naval victory in the year 853 BC (see above).

The region of Lake Zeribar therefore once boasted not one but two Assyrian royal monuments, which is a testament to its importance in the Iron Age. The Marivan district has great archaeological potential for the Iron Age period, and the authors hope that the near future will see targeted excavations in this still underexplored area.

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³⁷ Schachner 2009 a, 206 Fig. 206; 207 Fig. 226; 209 Fig. 229; 211 Fig. 230; 212 Figs. 232–233.

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