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# An Inscribed Kassite Weight from Kermānšāh Province, Western Iran

<https://doi.org/10.1515/aof-2024-0021>

**Abstract:** A Babylonian inscription found in western Iran is written in the name of an official of the Kassite king Šagarakti-Šuriaš (1245–1233 B.C.). It provides the first contemporary evidence for the parentage of this king and supplements archival testimony to push back the known presence of the Babylonian province system in the Zagros by about half a century.

**Keywords:** Kassite, Kermānšāh, Šagarakti-Šuriaš, weight, Zagros

In 2020 a resident of Islamabad-e Ğarb met with Shahram Aliyari, at that time the Director of the Cultural Heritage and Tourism Department of Dalahou county in Kermānšāh province, in order to show him a photograph of an inscribed stone (Fig. 1) which he claimed to have found in the vicinity of Ğūr-e Sefīd, a village in Ğilān-e Ğarb district, 110 km west of Kermānšāh, 28 km south of Sar Pol-e Zahāb and 45 km southeast of Khānaqīn (Fig. 2). The individual in question described the object as an ovoid piece of limestone weighing about 25–30 kg. Although Shahram Aliyari tried to disabuse the finder of his belief that the object contained information on the location of buried treasure, and to persuade him that the inscription (Fig. 3)<sup>1</sup> most likely referred to its function as a weight (or the like), he was evidently not convinced and never returned to the Cultural Heritage office. As a result, we do not know what happened to this object, and there is no image other than the one published here. The dimensions are not known, nor what form the original object took (though a duck weight seems possible). But we continue to hope that the stone, which most likely belongs to the heritage of Kermānšāh province, and perhaps the region of Ğūr-e Sefīd specifically, may one day be handed in to the Cultural Heritage office, and not end up in a private collection.

## Text: Transliteration and Translation

- (1) 1 GUN GI.NA ša <sup>m</sup>GAL-ša-<sup>d</sup>ŠKUR  
 (2) <sup>lu<sub>2</sub></sup> SAG ša-ga-rak-ti-šu-ri-ia-aš  
 (3) <sup>r</sup>DUMU ku<sup>1</sup>-dur-<sup>d</sup>EN.LIL<sub>2</sub> LUGAL ŠAR<sub>2</sub>

- (1) One talent, correct (weight), of Rabâ-ša-Adad,  
 (2) ša rēši (official) of Šagarakti-Šuriaš,  
 (3) <sup>r</sup>son of Ku<sup>1</sup>dur -Enlil, king of the world.

## Commentary

(Line 1). One talent is equivalent to approximately 30 kg.

(Line 1). GI.NA: “correct” or “true” weight, not in itself an assertion of verification. It is not explicitly stated that the person mentioned on the weight vouched for its accuracy, though that could be a reasonable supposition.

<sup>1</sup> Fig. 3 is a provisional line drawing of the more legible portions of the cuneiform text, which has been prepared (by John MacGinnis) from the photograph (Fig. 2). It is to be hoped that the weight itself may eventually be recovered so that problems evident in the photo (e.g., from dirt, wear, inadequate lighting) may be ameliorated and that the arrangement of wedges may be fully clarified, especially for more complex signs such as GUN, LU<sub>2</sub>, LIL<sub>2</sub>, LUGAL.

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The inscription on another weight dating to the Kassite period indicates that the person whose name was on the weight had checked ([*u*<sub>2</sub>]-*sa-ni-iq*) its value.<sup>2</sup>

**(Line 1).** Rabâ-ša-Adad is a relatively uncommon name in the time of the Kassite dynasty. Another attestation of the same name (and person?), without a title, may be found in Ni. 7155: 4, a ration roster from Nippur dated in the reign of Kudur-Enlil (1254–1246).<sup>3</sup>

**(Line 2).** The title borne by Rabâ-ša-Adad can be expressed in two ways, either as *ša rēš Šagarakti-Šuriaš* (“attendant of Šagarakti-Šuriaš,” with the proper name of the king given as here) or as *ša rēš šarri* (“attendant of the king,” without naming the king). The first way of expressing the title is at present known only from personal inscriptions written in the name of the individual bearing the title and is comparatively rare, being attested to date otherwise only on six seal inscriptions from the reigns of Burna-Buriaš II (1359–1333) and Kurigalzu II (1332–1308).<sup>4</sup> The second way, without the royal name, is attested on numerous documents from the Kassite dynasty. This title could be borne simultaneously by more than one individual. Similar titles such as *ša rēš mār šarri* (“attendant of the prince”)<sup>5</sup> or *ša rēš PN* (“attendant of PN,” a non-royal person)<sup>6</sup> are also known. The attendant of a prince is attested only once, and the attendant of a private person is still fairly infrequent (fewer than a dozen instances noted to date).

The function of a *ša rēš šarri*, in so far as known from a few examples,<sup>7</sup> was to represent the king at functions principally outside the capital and is attested in a variety of situations. In the late Kassite period, this official sometimes served as part of a team which measured land and/or conveyed a real-estate title to an individual according to the terms of a royal grant (e.g., in *kudurrus*).<sup>8</sup> One such instance of royal land conveyance was recorded on a stone *kudurru* found at Sar Pol-e Zahāb, less than 30 km north of Gūr-e Sefid and dating from the reign of Marduk-apla-iddina I (1171–1159), some sixty years after the date of our weight.<sup>9</sup> A *ša rēš šarri* may be found in other roles such as: (a) supervising the orchards of a provincial capital (Upī);<sup>10</sup> (b) controlling the assignments (*dullu*) of local work crews, perhaps in conjunction with canal maintenance or irrigation;<sup>11</sup> or (c) imprisoning and transporting offenders.<sup>12</sup>

**(Line 2).** Šagarakti-Šuriaš (1245–1233), twenty-seventh king of the Kassite dynasty.

**(Line 3).** This is the first contemporary evidence for the parentage of Šagarakti-Šuriaš, which is otherwise known only from much later sources, Kinglist A and an inscription of Nabû-na'id (Nabonidus; 555–539).<sup>13</sup> There have been questions raised about the royal succession and family relationships between Šagarakti-Šuriaš and his predecessor as well as his successor (Kudur-Enlil and Kaštiliašu IV [1232–1225], respectively) because of political instability, relatively short reigns, regnal overlap, and the very few contemporary statements of filiation;<sup>14</sup> these problems remain unresolved.

2 MDP 14, 34, a duck weight. This probably dates from around the time of Nazi-Maruttaš (1307–1282), since Kašakti-Šugab son of Aḫubani, the person whose name is inscribed on the weight, is also attested in a *kudurru* written during that reign (MDP 2, 88 ii 30–31 = Paulus, AOAT 51 p. 328).

3 Dates for Kassite kings in this paper follow those in Brinkman 2017: 36.

4 One of the *ša rēš Kurigalzu* inscriptions, written in the name of Ilī-rabi, was excavated at Surḫ Dum-i-Lurī (Luristan), but in a mid-first-millennium context (OIP 108, 478–479 no. 10).

5 TuM NF 5, 18: 33.

6 MUN 368: 7; PBS 2/2, 20: 27; CBS 7212 rev. 7; Ni. 2895: 16. Sometimes expressed as *ša rēš Ø mār PN*, e.g.: CUSAS 30, 281: 8; Ni. 797: 7.

7 We are dealing here with the official's functions in the time of the Kassite dynasty, which are known mostly from *kudurrus* and letters. The official is also often mentioned in administrative texts, principally as a recipient of rations.

8 MDP 2, 100 i 30–32; BBSt 4 i 17; AfO 23 (1970) 2 i 11–12. These passages may be found in Paulus, AOAT 51 pp. 370, 385, and 455, respectively.

9 Hakemi 1347/1969; Borger 1970 (with the text of the Sar Pol-e Zahāb *kudurru* published on pp. 1–11).

10 PBS 1/2, 28: 6–7.

11 BE 17, 13: 5–10.

12 BE 17, 1: 4–8.

13 Kinglist A ii 6' (<sup>m</sup>ša<sub>2</sub>-ga-rak-<sup>r</sup>ti dUMU<sup>1</sup>-š<sub>u</sub><sub>2</sub>) and Schaudig, *Nabonid*, p. 425, 2.12, 1 iii 28–29 and 2.12, 11 iii 31–32, with a variant spelling of the patronym noted on p. 433.

14 Summarized in Brinkman 2017: 26 nn. 231–232.

The evidence here is sparse: a photograph of the inscription and an oral statement (not independently verifiable) describing the inscribed object and its recent location. Nonetheless, even under these circumstances, it is worth raising a question of context: is it plausible or even possible that this Babylonian weight could have been deposited in this approximate area at roughly the time of the inscription (third quarter of the thirteenth century) and that a Babylonian *ša rēš šarri* official could have been active in the region? Hitherto the earliest known evidence for the extension of the Babylonian provincial system into this part of western Iran dated half a century later, to the second quarter of the twelfth century, under Marduk-apla-iddina I (1171–1159), when there was a governor of Namar and Ḫalman (marked as a single province) referred to as locally active in the Sar-e Pol-e Zahāb *kudurru* mentioned above.<sup>15</sup> But we can now add to that an unpublished document in the Nippur Kassite archives (time range: 1360–1223)<sup>16</sup> which lists cuts of meat distributed to high dignitaries at Nippur on a festive occasion. The dignitaries include the king and the governors of the provinces of Bīt-Sîn-magir, Bīt-Sîn-šeme, the Sealand, and Namar.<sup>17</sup> The text has no preserved date, and its prosopography has as yet yielded no useful clues (most persons are mentioned by title only); but its archival context requires a date in or before 1223—thus not inconsistent with a time during or shortly after the reign of Šagarakti-Šuriaš. This would suggest that the Babylonian provincial system was installed in this section of western Iran already in the thirteenth century, some decades before Marduk-apla-iddina I.<sup>18</sup> Thus it is not inconceivable that Rabâ-ša-Adad could have been a Babylonian official with local jurisdiction at the putative time of the inscribing of this weight. This is not proof, but it may at least show that the notion is not entirely implausible.

## Abbreviations

Abbreviations follow the system of the *Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*, vol. 20 (*U and W*), pp. vii–xxxii, with the following additions:

CDLI: P = Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative, photo

CUSAS = Cornell University Studies in Assyriology and Sumerology

MUN = Mittelbabylonische Urkunden aus Nippur (= Sassmannshausen Beitr., pp. 183–456, pls. 1–92)

Ni. = Nippur; siglum of tablets, etc., in the Nippur collection of the İstanbul Arkeoloji Müzeleri

UAVA = Untersuchungen zur Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie

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<sup>15</sup> AfO 23 (1970) 2 i 13–14.

<sup>16</sup> I.e., from the fifteenth year of Kadašman-Enlil I (1374–1360) to the first year of Kadašman-Ḫarbe II (1223), with a very few earlier outliers.

<sup>17</sup> CBS 7235: 2, 7–9, 23 (CDLI: P262265). The title of the governor of Namar is written *GAR KUR na-mar*.

<sup>18</sup> A hint of involvement of an earlier Kassite monarch in the Zagros may be contained in an enigmatic Neo-Babylonian text in a quasi-literary style, PBS 13, 69, which mentions Nazi-Maruttaš (1307–1282) and *māt Namri* (the latter a first-millennium equivalent of Namar) in unclear context. For further comments on this text, see Frazer 2013: 206–212 and Fuchs 2017: 147.

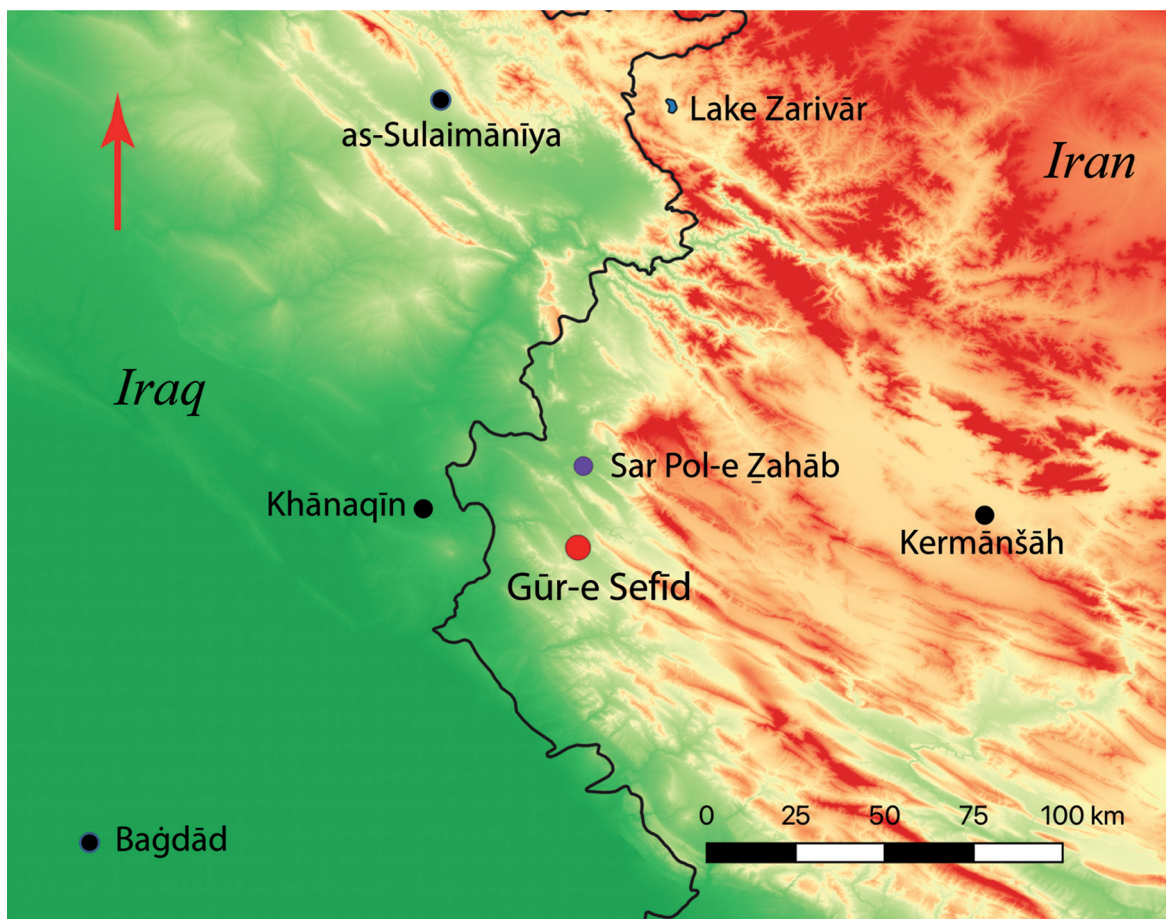


Fig. 1: Map showing the location of Gūr-e Sefīd.



Fig. 2: The photograph of the inscribed weight.

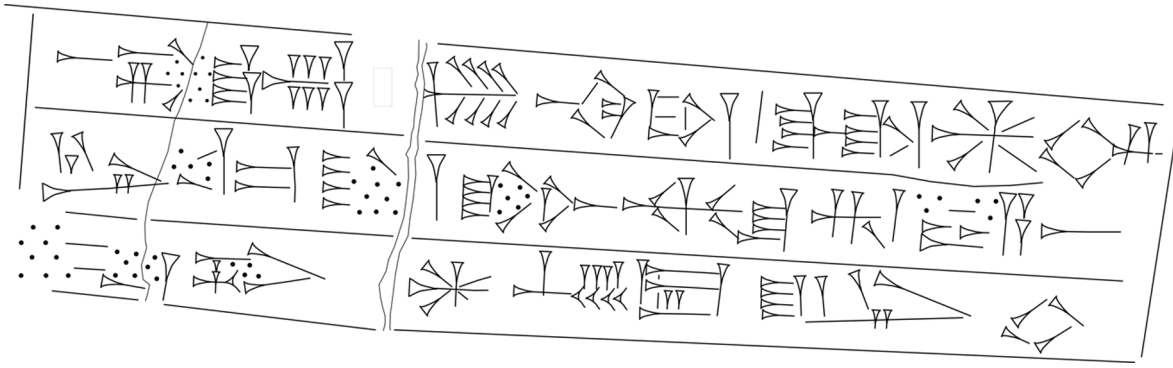


Fig. 3: The cuneiform inscription on the Gūr-e Sefīd weight.