

The “Black Stone of Susa:” A Lost *kudurru*, an Unpublished Drawing and a Line of Middle Elamite Copied in the 1820s

by DANIEL THOMAS POTTS, GIAN PIETRO BASELLO

La cosiddetta “pietra nera di Susa” era un *kudurru* babilonese proveniente dalle rovine di Susa e conosciuto sin dagli inizi dell’Ottocento grazie alla descrizione e allo schizzo pubblicati dal reverendo Robert Walpole nel 1820. Il ritrovamento di un disegno inedito del *kudurru* tra le carte dell’ufficiale francese Claude Auguste Court (1893-1880) è l’occasione per una disamina del monumento e della sua storia antica e recente, che si concluse purtroppo con la sua distruzione. Il disegno di Court include inoltre una riga di segni cuneiformi elamici che è stato possibile identificare come parte della titolatura del sovrano medio-elamita Shutruk-Nahunte (XII sec. a.C.), forse dall’iscrizione secondaria apposta sul *kudurru* S^b 14, uno dei primi a pervenire al Louvre da Susa a inizio Novecento.

Introduction

In his “Notice of some remarkable antiquities, found among the ruins of Susa, in Persia,” the Rev. Robert Walpole (1781-1856) (Fig. 1) published a description and drawing of an object (Walpole 1820: 424-426) (Fig. 2) that was commonly referred to in the 19th century as the “black stone of Susa” but has more recently been called the “Walpole *kudurru*” (Seidl 1968: 21, no. 1). Although it was only ever seen by four European visitors to Susa that we know of—William Monteith (Fig. 3), John Macdonald (Kinneir), Robert Gordon (Fig. 4) and Claude Auguste Court—the Walpole *kudurru*¹ generated a certain amount of interest in the 19th and 20th century, less because of its ancient significance than because of its modern destruction. Much of the discussion surrounding the object has been ignored in previous scholarship and deserves to be better known as part of the history of the field. Moreover, a previously unknown drawing of the *kudurru*, by the French military officer Claude Auguste Court, has recently been identified, clarifying certain details that were not readily apparent in previously published drawings. Additionally, Court’s drawing contains a line of carefully copied cuneiform, identifiable as Middle Elamite, revealing, for the first time, an intriguing Elamite discovery made at Susa in the early 1820s.²

¹ The term *kudurru* is used here as a convention. For a discussion of the different self-referential terms used in the texts on such objects see Brinkman 2006: 6-8.

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