

A Door Socket from Šu-Suen's Shara Temple at Umma (Tell Jokha)

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Abstract:

This article presents a door socket found in the Šara temple of Umma during the excavations conducted by the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities from 1999 to 2002, under the supervision of Dr. Nawala Al-Mutawalli and Mr. Hamza Al-Harbi. These door sockets found *in situ* provide important information concerning the identification of the site, the temple, and the main god of Umma.

Keywords: Door, Socket, Umma, Inscriptions, Excavation, Shara Temple.

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صنارة باب (ركيزة) من معبد الاله شارا (العائد الى) شو - سين في اوما (تل جوخة)

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الملخص:

تقدم هذه المقالة معلومات عن صنارة باب (ركيزة باب)، تم العثور عليها في معبد الاله شارا في مدينة أوما (تل جوخة حديثا)، أثناء التنقيبات التي أجرتها الهيئة العامة للآثار والتراث العراقية من عام ١٩٩٩ إلى عام ٢٠٠٢. برئاسة كل من الدكتورة نواله احمد المتولي والسيد حمزة شهد الحربي، يوفر النص المسماري المدون على هذه الصنارات التي وجدت في موقعها الاصلي، معلومات مهمة تتعلق بتحديد هوية الموقع والمعبد وتسميته واسم الاله الرئيس لمدينة أوما. الكلمات المفتاحية: صنارة باب، أوما، كتابات، تنقيبات، معبد شارا.

1. The door sockets from the Temple of Šara at Umma

Tell Jokha lies 34 km west of the modern city Al-Rifa'i in the Al-Nasiriya Province and was declared an archaeological site in 1935¹⁾. Since the late 19th century, the site of Jokha has been visited by travellers and plundered by looters, and the clay tablets found there allowed the conclusion that Jokha was the site of ancient Umma (Scheil 1897; see in more detail below the appendix).

A century after the identification of the site, the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage organised the first scholarly excavation at Jokha and other sites of the Umma region to stop lootings and destruction. Other archaeological teams worked in Umm Al-Aqarib (Almamori 2014b) only 7 km to the southwest, as well as in Ibzeikh, ancient Zabalam, and in Shmet, perhaps ancient KIAN (Fahad & Abbas 2020), both situated some kilometres to the north. The Jokha excavations were directed by Nawala Al-Mutawalli in the first two seasons 1999 and 2000 and by her together with Hamza Shahad al-Harbi in 2001 and 2002. The Iraqi team had to leave the site in November 2002. Later, a Slovak team started to work in Umma²⁾.

The work of the Iraqi SBAH expedition started in May 1999 to accomplish the first contour map of the site and after some soundings on the Main Tell, Al-

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Mutawalli soon directed her attention towards a plain area situated at the northern flank of the main hill. After a few days, the first walls of a large building were unearthed, and it soon proved to be the temple of Umma's main god Šara³⁾.

The temple (Fig. 1) is an enormous structure of 90×130 m, built with mud bricks on a huge platform. Due to the erosion, the temple is not completely preserved, especially in the north only parts of the platform could be found. The thick outer wall surrounding the building measures 6 m, it is decorated with buttresses and recesses and features two entrances. Both doorways are singled out by a stepped doorway with façades decorated with double niches. The main courtyard of 42×30 meters is confined at its northern part by a long "corridor" paved with baked bricks and bitumen. Behind the corridor, the best-preserved wall with niches leads to the central part of the temple. In this eroded area once the cellas for the god Šara and his wife Ninurra must have been situated. More than twenty square and rectangular rooms flank the main courtyard in the northeast and southwest. The excavators⁴⁾ provided more details regarding the temple building.

Although the rooms of the temple were mostly empty, the artefacts found in the courtyard and in several rooms add up to a remarkable collection of objects mostly dating to the Ur III and the Early Old Babylonian periods, including only a few Sargonic pieces. The collection includes dedicatory and partly inscribed objects and weights left in the main courtyard, of which a sculpted vase was published recently;⁵⁾ a group of clay tablets of Ur III date mostly related to Umma's tanner Ayakala and found with a stone vessel in Room 10, Level II 90 tablets and a coherent series of 123 bullae dated to the early years of Sumuel and dealing with the administration of grain.

The publication of the inscriptions and the tablets from the Šara temple is planned for volume 1 of the series "Cuneiform texts from the Iraqi excavations at Umma" (UmCT). We have opted to present one of the door socket inscriptions in advance since it provides the key reference for the identification of the temple excavated by the Iraqi team.

Door sockets were found in situ in several places of the building, and fragments of other stones were picked up in the rubbish left by the looters. We have chosen to start from the well-preserved text on a cuboid stone block (20 × 25 cm) found in the doorway to Room 20 from the corridor at the outer southern door jamb. It was excavated during the first season of excavations. The inscription is written on the vertical side of the stone block and was therefore sunk into the ground. In the bowl-like depression on top, some copper from the doorpost has remained. The bronze nails and fittings found on the floor in the doorway to Room 10 may well stem from the door leaf⁶⁾.

In other rooms, looters had removed the door sockets and the holes they left were sometimes still visible. Beyond that, looters had destroyed the pavement in many rooms of the temple, and especially the main entrance area

was found in poor condition. Plasters and doorways must have been destroyed in the search for inscribed door sockets that are now kept in various museums of the world.

The inscriptions refer to the building of the temple of Šara by Šu-Suen, king of Ur as does the inscription presented in this article, and thus they came from the same building. The shorter inscription of 13 lines, edited by D. R. Frayne in the Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia project as “Šu-Suen 16” is known from six exemplars in various museum. One object (ex. 1) in the British Museum (BM 103333) bears the registration date 1911-4-8, 43 and was therefore found in the course of renewed lootings at Umma from 1911 onwards, another piece was added later (BM 11439, registration date 1920-3-15, 7). Further eight objects preserve a longer inscription of thirty lines, “Šu-Suen 17” Again, one block from the 1911 looting wave found its way to the British Museum (BM 103354). calls them door sockets and “stone blocks”, but regarding the excavated remains of the Šara temple, all stone blocks may once have served as door sockets. The 14 door sockets known from museum collections bear two different versions of the inscription and are made of various kinds of stone in either wheel-like or cuboid format. Their original distribution in the temple, however, must remain unknown.

The sample of Šu-Suen inscriptions for the building of Šara’s temple includes a stone tablet at Yale and an inscribed brick reported among the finds of the Iraq excavations.

2. The inscription “Šu-Suen 16”

The inscription on the door socket Um. 1033, IM 163368, represents another exemplar of the text edited as “Šu-Suen 16”.

1	^d šara ₂	For Šara,
2	nir-ĝal ₂ an-na	who has a reputation from An,
3	dumu ki-aĝ ₂	beloved son
4	^d inana	of Inana,
5	ad-da-ne ₂ -er	his father,
6	^d šu- ^d ZUEN	Šu-Suen,
		(first insertion in “Šu-Suen 17”)
7	lugal kala-ga	strong king,
8	lugal urim ₅ ^{ki} -ma	king of Urim,
9	lugal an-ub -da limmu ₂ -ba-ke ₄	king of the four quarters,
		(second insertion in “Šu-Suen 17”)
		(13) he built for him
10	e ₂ -ša ₃ -ge ₄ -pa ₃ -da	Ešagepada,
11	e ₂ ki aĝ ₂ -ĝa ₂ -ne ₂	his (i. e. Šara’s) beloved temple,
12	nam-til ₃ -la-ne ₂ -še ₃	for his (i. e. Šu-Suen’s) own life.
13	mu-na-du ₃	

The inscription “Šu-Suen 16” follows the standard format of numerous Sumerian dedicatory inscriptions, but against this common background, some aspects of this text are noteworthy.

The introductory lines 1 to 5 characterising god Šara are also found in the longer 30-line inscription “Šu-Suen 17” from the Šara temple (RIM E3/2.1.4.17). Šara's epithets “who has a reputation from An, beloved son of Inana” (nir-ĝal₂ an-na | dumu ki-aĝ₂ | ^dinana, lines 2–4) must have been a standardised formula to characterise the god since the same words are known from votive inscriptions for Šara dating to the Ur III period: a vase dedicated for the life of Šulgi by a merchant, and a bronze axe dedicated for the life of Šu-Suen by a soldier ¹⁾ Šara was considered the son of Inana, more precisely of the Inana of Zabalam, as attested in the Presargonic “Riddles of Lagaš” and the “Temple Hymns” describing a Sargonic situation, and he was “the beloved son of Inana” in the Lugalbanda Epic ²⁾.

More noteworthy is the unique epithet by which king Šu-Suen expressed his relation to god Šara as “his father” (ad-da-ne₂-, line 5), used here instead of the usual wording “his lord” (lugal-a-ne₂-). Divine parents appear sometimes in royal texts of the Lagaš II and Ur III dynasties. Gudea, for example, called Ĝatumdu his mother (Cylinder A iii 6), and Ninsumun of Uruk was venerated as the divine mother of the ruling Ur III kings. At Umma itself, the city-ruler Lu-Utu who must have reigned in the period of Gutium, introduced himself as “son of Ninisina”. But these cases all deal with a divine mother and not a divine father, thus in this regard, the Šu-Suen inscription remains unique. We will return to this aspect in the next section.

Šu-Suen built the temple “for his own life” (nam-til₃-la-ne₂-še₃, line 12; also in Šu-Suen 17 line 29). Such a phrase is common in votive inscriptions of the Lagaš II and Ur III periods (verb a ru) and in dedications (including buildings) for the life of another person, usually the ruler. In building inscriptions, however, this phrase is extremely rare and known to me only from two inscriptions again from Lu-Utu, the already-mentioned city-ruler of Umma in the period of Gutium who built temples for Ninhursaga and for Ereškigal “for his life”. Therefore, Šu-Suen might have followed a local Umma tradition in the formulation of the inscription. The building of a temple “for his (i. e. the ruler's) own life” becomes more frequent only in later centuries, in inscriptions of Nūr-Adad, Sîn-iddinam, Warad-Sîn or Rīm-Sîn I. of Larsa or Bilalama of Ešnunna.

A longer, 30-line version of Šu-Suen's inscription for his building of the Šara temple is preserved on some door sockets and “stone blocks”, edited as “Šu-Suen 17”. This longer version is in its core identical to our 13-lines inscription, but it inserts two additional passages, first more titles for Šu-Suen after line 6:

6	^d šu- ^d ZUEN	Šu-Suen,
7	isib an-na	purification priest of An,
8	guda ₄ šu dadag	cult priest with pure hands

9	^d en-lil ₂	for Enlil
10	^d nin-lil ₂ -ka	and Ninlil,
11	u ₃ diĝir gal-gal-e-ne	and of the great gods,
12	lugal ^d en-lil ₂ -le	the king, whom Enlil
13	ki aĝ ₂	lovingly (15) chose
14	ša ₃ -ga-na	in his heart
15	in-pa ₃	
16	sipa kalam-ma-še ₃	for being the shepherd of the land,

The first insertion gave more elaborate epithets for King Šu-Suen of which the second set in lines 12 to 16 was a standard component of Šu-Suen's titles. The priestly titles as a purification and cult priest serving An, Enlil and Ninlil, and the great gods (lines 7–11), on the other hand, are known only from one other fragmentary inscription of Šu-Suen. No other Ur III king was entitled a priest in their many inscriptions. One has to go back for almost three centuries to the famous last king of Umma before Sargon's advent, Lugalzagesi, who was called "purification priest of An" (isib an-na) as well, but also lu₂-maḥ priest of Nisaba in his vase inscription from Nippur. Sargon of Akkade once used the same title "purification priest of An" (isib an-na), listed after "commissioner (maškim) of Inana" and before "ens₂-gal of Enlil and Ninlil." Only later kings of Isin and Larsa such as Lipit-Eštar and Rīm-Sîn took up the priestly title again. Can this title, again, be inherited from a special Umma tradition?

The variant Šu-Suen 17 furthermore includes a date for the building activity before line 10 of our standard inscription:

17–19		= lines 7–9 in the 13-line inscription "Šu-Suen 16", standard titulary of Šu-Suen
20	u ₄ bad ₃ ĝar ₇ -du ₂	when he (23) had built (20) the Amorite wall,
21	mu-ri-iq	
22	ti-id-ni-im	Murīq-Ditnum ("which keeps the Ditnum
23	mu-du ₃ -a	tribes at distance")
24	u ₃ ĝiri ₃ ĝar ₇ -du ₂	and (26) had directed (24) the migrations of
25	ma-da-ne ₂	the Amorites back to their land
26	bi ₂ -in-gi ₄ -a	
27–30		= lines 10–13 in Šu-Suen 16: building Ešagepada

The building of the Amorite wall in lines 20–23 corresponds literally to the date formula for the fourth year of Šu-Suen and thus places the building activity in a certain year. This matter is, however, more complex and we will devote a new paragraph to this aspect.

3. Šu-Suen builds a temple for Šara: a lesson in matters of royal representation

Šu-Suen built a temple for Šara of Umma as testified by the door sockets found in the building excavated at Jokha. The same deed is recorded in the name for Šu-Suen's ninth and last year:

mu ^dšu-^dzuen lugal urim^{ki}-ma-ke⁴ e² ^dšara² umma^{ki}-ka mu-du³

“Year: Šu-Suen, king of Ur, built the temple of Šara of Umma.” (Date formula Šu-Suen 9)

The fact that an early Mesopotamian king built a temple with inscriptions there and named a year after that deed seems to be a standard procedure. However, the contrary is the case and each single aspect is exceptional.

3.1 *The temple of Šara as an exceptional temple building in the reign of Šu-Suen*

First of all, Šu-Suen did not invest much in the building of temples in Mesopotamia. The founder of the Third Dynasty of Ur, Ur-Namma, had realised a gigantic building programme concerning the central temple buildings of the land, his son and successor Šulgi had concentrated on second-rank temples, and the third king Amar-Suena erected some religious buildings in Ur, Eridu, Uruk, and Nippur. Šu-Suen, however, developed a more pronounced ideological representation of the king as a divine ruler, and building inscriptions from his reign came first of all from temples for the divine King Šu-Suen built in the cities of Adab, Ešnunna, Girsu, and Ur. Two small-scale religious buildings to deities were both situated in Ur: a sanctuary for Nanna called e²-mu-ri-a-na-ba-as in the Ĝanunmah complex and a sanctuary for Anunītum situated close to or in the Ĝepar building of Amar-Suena (RIM E3/2.1.4.20). In the latter inscription, Šu-Suen dedicated the building to Anunītum “his spouse” (dam-a-ni-ir), and thus represented himself as a member of the divine world similarly to when he called Šara “his father” in our inscription from Umma.

Furthermore, one has to look back to Šulgi's reign to find other royal activities at temples memorised in year names. Šulgi “brought a god into his house”, a formula probably referring to restoration work performed for Nanna of Karzida/Gaeš (Šulgi 36), Numušda of Kazallu (Šulgi 11) or Ištaran of Dēr (Šulgi 36, the last date, was thirty years before Šu-Suen 9! Building a temple (verb du³) was only recorded by Ur-Namma for Ninsumun in Ur: this was around seventy years before Šu-Suen 9, and represented the only other temple building phrase with the verb du³ in the whole dynasty of Ur.

Therefore, the inscriptions from the Šara temple are the only building inscriptions for a large temple known from Šu-Suen, and naming a year after building a temple has not been seen since the time of Ur-Namma, for almost seventy years.

3.2 The temple building as an enterprise over nine years from Amar-Suena 8 to Šu-Suen 8

The construction of the Šara temple is one of the royal building projects that is also reflected in the administrative documents of the time. Piotr Steinkeller has offered an overview of the sources. As he has underlined, most administrative documents refer to the building of the enormous platform of the temple, and this took place in the year Šu-Suen 2. This is in line with the dating of the door sockets with a date referring to or after Šu-Suen 4, a certain time after the completion of the platform, the plastering, and the building of the walls. It may have taken some more years to complete the building to commemorate it in the year name Šu-Suen 9, and thus the building may have been finished in Šu-Suen 8.

In the year Šu-Suen 8, “a statue of Šu-Suen was brought into the temple of Šara”. This was the second statue of the divine King Šu-Suen venerated in Umma. Furthermore, “scented butter” (i₃-nun du₁₀-ga) was offered to “Šara of Umma, brought together with the royal sacrifices of cattle and sheep” (gud udu niĝ₂-ĝeš-ta₃-ga lugal-da de₆-a, BDTNS 192668 o.2). The dedication of a royal statue and the royal offerings may have taken place in the context of the inauguration of the Šara temple in the year Šu-Suen 8.

had already pointed out that his text 63 notes the first sacrifices in the preparation of the temple’s foundations already in year 9 of Amar-Suena. The first preparatory measures took place one year earlier. A sheep was offered on a remarkable occasion: “for the ‘lords’/‘high priestesses’ of Šara, when their burials were transferred because the temple of Šara had to be built” (en-en ^dšara₂ e₂ ki-sa₆ bala-a mu e₂ ^dšara₂ du₃-da-še₃), and this text is dated to year 8 of Amar-Suena .

The document tells what the excavations revealed: directly under the eroded parts at the western corner of the temple no earlier temple walls were found but instead domestic remains as reported by Al-Mutawalli. The new temple of Šara thus extended beyond an earlier building (see below). Therefore, the graves of the earlier priests or high priestesses had to be removed when the building started. The temple building process started in year 8 of Amar-Suena to be completed after nine years in the year Šu-Suen 8 with the introduction of a royal statue in the temple. Most building activities happened in Šu-Suen 2, and the door sockets were placed there in or after Šu-Suen 4.

3.3 The ideological background: Šu-Suen’s measures against the representation of his father Amar-Suena

The fact that the Šara temple at Umma was begun by Amar-Suena and finished by Šu-Suen has to be evaluated in the larger perspective of the royal ideology of the two kings concerned. Amar-Suena’s veneration was of exceptional importance at Umma, since only there one introduced a month dedicated to the “Festival of Amar-Suena” (iti izim ^damar-^dzuen) in the local

calendar. This name for the seventh month of the year was attested from the years Amar-Suena 6 to 8 and in Šu-Suen 2 and was abandoned afterwards ⁹⁾ Divine Amar-Suena received regular sacrifices at the monthly festivals in Umma, with a higher amount from Amar-Suena 6 onwards ¹⁰⁾. His festival after which the seventh month was named included only a few additional offerings for divine Amar-Suena, but huge quantities (more than 4000 L) of barley, fat, and fruit were delivered, perhaps for a public feasting ¹¹⁾ from TCL 5 6040).

Šu-Suen was venerated at the monthly temple offerings as well, and of him, two statues received their share. The first statue must have been introduced after month 9 of the year Šu-Suen 2 when he had not yet received monthly offering ¹²⁾ Since no dated documents are known for the middle years of Šu-Suen, the date when the first statue of Šu-Suen was installed can not be fixed more precisely. The second statue was most probably the one dedicated in Šu-Suen 8 and perhaps related to the completion of the new Šara temple as mentioned above.

The year Šu-Suen 2 was a turning point in the veneration of Amar-Suena when the month "Festival of Amar-Suena" was abandoned and the old month name (min-eš₃) was used again. This is the same year when Šu-Suen invested much labour in the building of the new Šara temple as evidenced by the administrative documents assembled by Steinkeller. Šu-Suen did not introduce a month name "Festival of Šu-Suen" in Umma, as he had done in the state calendar and the calendar of Ur; perhaps the fame of Amar-Suena was too strong at Umma. Furthermore, the monthly sacrifices for Amar-Suena mentioned above were not abandoned or rededicated as it was the case in Nippur where the series of the venerated kings read "Šu-Suen, Suen, Šulgi" with Suen instead of Amar-Suena ¹³⁾.

In Umma, however, Šu-Suen seized the opportunity to take over Amar-Suena's prestigious temple-building project. In his second year, the year when the month-name "Festival of Amar-Suena" was abandoned and before the new royal statue was introduced in the Šara temple, Šu-Suen ordered a massive building operation for the platform of the Šara temple ¹⁴⁾ Šu-Suen's programme to reduce the memory of his father Amar-Suena to a minimum was already well-known ¹⁵⁾, and in this regard we read the dedication to Šara with other eyes: Šu-Suen dedicated the new temple to Šara "his father" (ad-da-ne₂-er), and by placing Umma's tutelary god in the role of his father he also eliminated the memory of his natural father Amar-Suena, the same who in fact had begun with the large building programme of Umma's Šara temple. This historical background may elucidate why Šu-Suen had chosen to name his ninth year after this temple building.

4. Ešagepada, the Temple of Šara at Umma

In the inscription "Šu-Suen 16" found on door sockets excavated by the Iraqi archaeologists in the Šara temple, the building was named Ešagepada

“House: Selected by (his) heart.” As the above-cited administrative text \concerning the removal of graves for the temple building shows, the new temple building occupied a larger area than its predecessor. The existence of the predecessor at the same place is not only confirmed by the burial of high priests or priestesses at this place but the temple name “Ešagepada of Umma (ĜIŠ.KUŠU^{ki})” is attested in an Early Sargonic text from the Umma region. Otherwise, administrative documents usually did not indicate the name of a temple, but referred to the deity in his or her city, thus “Šara of Umma.”

The temple name Ešagepada was listed as the fourth temple of Šara in line 454 of the Canonical Temple list¹⁶. This temple list is structured according to the god names, and accordingly, Šara follows shortly after the over eighty temples of his mother Inana and the eleven temples of Inana’s bridegroom Dumuzi, just before the temples of her vizier Ninsubur. The five temple names listed for Šara in the Canonical Temple list lines 451-455 are the following ones:

(1; line 451) E₂-maḥ was the name of Šara’s temple at KĪ.AN in the Ur III

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9, another annual summary of sheep that were expended for sacrifices in the Umma province. This text enumerated first the annual offerings of sheep for “Šara in Umma” (i 1–ii 25); then those for “Šara of KĪ.AN” (ii 26–iii 11), divided into the regular consignments (Šar-du₃ ii 26–iii 9) and a special expenditure of one kid (1 maš) e₂-maḥ sikil-la “the Emah purified” (iii 10). The Emah, therefore, belonged to Šara of KĪ.AN. This is a piece of important information regarding the cultic topography of the Umma province, since in the Temple Hymns (4; line 454) Umma Šara appears with the temple Emah (the Iraq. text, line 312) as the Zā-Su-Suen, and the Vā-sapient list Šama as the god of KĪ.AN. Of Sargonic KĪ.AN, probably is to be identified with (UŠA.St 35 row 474) metra about the Emah and was originally the most important cult place of Šara, so well known from archival texts, and the references to the building activities in the time of Šu-Suen that coincide with the dedication by the king on the door-sockets are ample proof of that. Interestingly, Early Dynastic Umma was considered the cult place of Šara’s divine wife Ninurra in the Zami hymns²⁰. But there can be no doubt that Šara and Ninurra were always venerated together in their temple at Umma.

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(5; line 455) E₂-u₄-šakar-ra “House: New Moon” is the fifth name of a Šara temple; it is not attested elsewhere.

Besides the temple names from the Canonical Temple List, Sumerian literature and archival texts document other cult places for Šara in the Umma province²⁰.

In conclusion: According to the inscription on door sockets excavated in the temple building at Jokha, Šu-Suen built a temple named Ešagepada for Umma's main god Šara the son of Inana. The find proves the identification of the ancient city of Umma with the site of Jokha, and it identifies the temple as the Ešagepada among the various temples of Šara in the Umma region. For Šu-Suen, the building project begun by his father Amar-Suena offered him an opportunity to present himself as a true servant of Umma's main god whom he adopted as “his father”. Being the only major temple building performed by an Ur III king for decades, Šu-Suen correctly named his ninth regnal year after this deed.

This temple was in use from at least the year 9 of Šu-Suen (2027 BCE) until the time of Sumuel of Larsa (1889 BCE), i.e. for 138 years, when documents were found on a higher floor level in Room 21²¹). The sealed bullae published in UmCT 2²²) attest to substantial monthly consignments of barley delivered to the temple of Šara and handled there by a collegium of priests. Although at the time of Sumuel or slightly later the floor level of Room 21 was renewed or the room had been given up, the documents from Umma including those from the Main Tell (UmCT 3) document a continued cultic activity of Šara, no doubt performed in the temple built by Šu-Suen of Ur.

Appendix: Tell Jokha (Ĝōḥa) = ancient *Umma* (written GIŠ.KUŠU₂^{ki}): on the name of Umma again

Šu-Suen's door socket inscriptions found *in situ* prove that the excavated building can be identified with Šu-Suen's Šara temple Ešagepada in the city of Umma (GIŠ.KUŠU₂^{ki}); this confirms the identification of the site of Jokha with the ancient city of Umma. The presentation of one door socket provides a good opportunity to review the discussions concerning the name of “Umma” and the identification of the site Jokha.

With the early discovery of Ur III tablets at Jokha mentioning the city-ruler (ens₂) of Umma (written GIŠ.KUŠU₂^{ki}), proposed that the site of Jokha was the ancient city of Umma thereby pointing to the parallel example of Tello²⁴). This identification of the site has been generally accepted; Thureau-Dangin (1937, 177), for example, referred to this identification when he published a golden plaque found at Jokha bearing an inscription of Parairnun, the wife of Ĝeššakidu of Umma as “une tablette en or provenant d'Umma”²⁵).

Scheil (1897) in his note had not yet read correctly the cuneiform signs of the city name, and he called it “GIŠ.BAN.KI.” The second sign of the city name, however, is not a form of BAN, but a completely different cuneiform sign, nowadays mostly called KUŠU₂²⁶ or sometimes also UH/UH₃ already knew the correct identification of the sign as noted earlier by Scheil (1898, no. 99), but instead of UH₃, he proposed another, incorrect reading as “*hú*” (by splitting the *diri* sign UD.KUŠU₂ = *uh₂/uh₂* into *u₄-“hu_x”*). Furthermore, he speculated that the signs could be read phonetically *Giš-hu* and thought it “not impossible” that this name was the same as modern *Gōḥa* (“Vielleicht hiess die Stadt *Giš-hu*. Nicht unmöglich, dass der Name = heutigem Djocha”).

However, as in so many names of cities, the two signs GIŠ.KUŠU₂ (or “GIŠ.UH₃”) should not be read phonetically, but they represent together a logogram with a different reading. The one who found the correct reading *Umma* for the name of our city written with the signs GIŠ.KUŠU₂^{ki} was Friedrich Hrozný (1907, 421–424). In a note called “Der Name der altbabylonischen Stadt (GIŠ.HU^{ki})” he referred to the information from a lexical list a manuscript of Diri. Thanks to the publication of the Diri tradition by Miguel Civil in MSL 15 (2004), the lexical evidence for the reading of the logogram GIŠ.KUŠU₂^{ki} as *Umma* is nowadays easily available (note that MSL 15 uses the sign name “UH” for KUŠU₂) with two Old Babylonian sources (from Nippur and Sippar) and the canonical version of Diri from the first millennium:

Text 1: Diri references

OB Diri Nippur 230 (MSL 15, 20–21):	<i>um-me-en</i>	GIŠ.KUŠU ₂ ^{ki}
	<i>ki-iš-[...]</i>	
(OB) Diri Sippar 4:09 (MSL 15, 56–57):	<i>um-ma</i>	GIŠ. ¹ KUŠU ₂ ^{1ki}
	¹ <i>ki</i> ¹ -[...] ²⁷	
Diri III 74 (MSL 15, 140–141):	<i>um-mi/-ma/-me</i>	GIŠ.KUŠU ₂ ^{ki} <i>ki-is-[...]</i>

The Diri entries have to be understood in the following way: *umma* (or *ummen*, *ummi*, *umme*) is the reading of the sign group GIŠ.KUŠU₂^{ki}. And then the text adds an “Akkadian” translation or explanation of the city name as *Kiš/s...* We will return to that question below.

An independent confirmation for the reading *Umma* of the logogram group GIŠ.KUŠU₂^{ki} as given in the lexical list would be most welcome, especially for the third millennium. Luckily, such evidence is available, and it supports the information of the Diri lists. In royal inscriptions of Sargon and Rimuš, kings of Akkade, the Sumerian version writes the name of the city as GIŠ.KUŠU₂^{ki}, whereas the Akkadian version has *ub-me*^{ki} instead (see references cited by²⁸)²⁹ According to the standard interpretation and as underlined by Gianni Marchesi *ub-me*^{ki} is a phonographic writing of the place-name of *Umma*.

The same orthography *ub-me*^{ki} is known from a Presargonic or Early Sargonic document probably from Isin, BIN 8 159³⁰; it might well refer to Umma since the logographic writing GIŠ.KUŠU₂^{ki} is not attested in the early Isin

texts. Vitali Bartash (2015, § 4) published the administrative list of persons MS 4767 dating back to the Fara period which includes (in column iv) persons from *ub-me*^{ki} after those from “Ġirsu” and “Lagas”; this suggests that indeed the city of Umma was meant. The provenance of the text can not be decided, but at Fara itself, the logographic writing for *Umma* is well attested.

Sargonic royal inscriptions were very careful in rendering place names, and so one wonders whether other geographical names were given in a Sumerian and an Akkadian version. Besides the only real translation of the word for “Sumer”, *ki-en-gi* = *šumerum* found in the inscriptions of kings of Akkade, other differentiations between the Sumerian and Akkadian versions are purely orthographic, like Sumerian *ag-ge-de*^{ki} = Akkadian *a-ga-de*^{ki} (Kienast/Sommerfeld 1994, 73–75); Sumerian *si-mur-um*^{ki} = Akkadian *si-mu-ur₄-ri₂-im*^{ki}. A good parallel to our case (logographic *GIŠ.KUŠU₂*^{ki} in the Sumerian version, phonographic *ub-me*^{ki} in the Akkadian text) is provided by the phonographic rendering of the name of “Susa” in Akkadian Sargonic inscriptions as *su-si-in/im*^{ki}, whereas elsewhere in Sargonic documents the logogram *MUŠ₃.EREN*^{ki} is employed³¹⁾ *MUŠ₃.EREN*^{ki} is not attested in Sumerian royal inscription from the dynasty of Akkade).

To conclude:

(1) *Ubme* (23rd century), *Ummen*, *Umma* (19th/18th centuries BCE), or *Umma*, *Umme*, *Ummi* (first millennium BCE) are the readings known for the city name written with the diri logogram *GIŠ.KUŠU₂*^{ki} (also rendered *GIŠ.UH₃*^{ki}) and this city was the one at Tell Jokha because the Šu-Suen door sockets were found there in situ; the conventional pronunciation is *Umma*.

The Diri passages cited as Text 1 give a second interpretation of the city-name *Umma* = *GIŠ.KUŠU₂*^{ki} as *Kiš/s...* This fragmentary entry poses a problem since there appears to be no need for an “Akkadian” or a second name for the city. Parallels for a second equation hardly exist, I am aware of *Ararma* and *Larsam* as “Sumerian” and “Akkadian” names of Larsa (whereas usually Sumerian and Akkadian names are more or less the same (as *Zimbir/Sippir*; Diri I 142).

Wilfred G.³²⁾ who studied this problem proposed to understand this entry as giving a second name for *Umma* (*GIŠ.KUŠU₂*^{ki}). He reconstructed this second name as “*Kissa*” or “*Kišša*” after a first-millennium Balaġ composition, Immal gudedē, with a line referring to a temple called Euršaba:

Text 2: Immal gudedē ³³⁾line b+148 (manuscripts F = K.3001, BL 175; H = K.2004, BA 5 1b; photos available through eBL)

F o.14UD.KUŠU^{ki}ur₅-ša₃-ba DIŠ ki-s[a ur-ša₂-b]a ba-ḫul-⟨la-še₃⟩

H o.29 [... -š]a₃-ba DIŠ ki-sa ur-ša₂-ba ba-ḫul-⟨la-še₃⟩

(E)uršaba is a temple of the mother goddess Lisin, known from the Canonical Temple List line 412, and some litanies³⁴⁾ suggested correcting

UD.KUŠU₂^{ki} (NB: the writing for the city-name *Akšak*) to GIŠ.KUŠU₂^{ki} “*Umma*”, and also postulated a cult of Lisin at Umma based on the existence of a month name “Lisin month” in the Umma calendar (iti ^dlisin; month IX). Lambert, however, passed over the problem that no important cult of Lisin at Umma is known from the Ur III period from which one disposes of rich documentation concerning cults³⁷⁾ or from earlier periods, and that a month “Festival of Lisin” existed in the Girsu calendar as well (month III) and thus was not specific for Umma. Furthermore, as far as I see, not a single reference indicates that a temple named “Euršaba” (or “Euršaga”) was situated in the city or region of Umma. Finally, the Sumerian text of the Balaĝ composition writes UD.KUŠU₂^{ki}, i.e. *Akšak*, and therefore no relation to Umma exists. What to do with all these open questions? Borger’s sign list³⁸⁾ offers a simple solution: the diri compound UD.KUŠU₂^{ki} represents not only *Akšak*, but also the city name of *Keš* or *Keši*. I will come back to the *Akšak/Keši* matter below.

Lambert’s proposal to restore *Kišša/Kissa* in Diri (Text 1 above) and understand it as a name of Umma, was based furthermore on the assumption to equate it with the topographic element ĝeš-ša₃-g known from third-millennium personal names from Umma such as ĝeš-ša₃-ki-du₁₀ “Ĝešša is a good place”³⁷⁾ Gebhard Selz (2003, 506) pointed to a possible development ĝ > k in word pairs like Sumerian ĝeš-kiĝ₂-ti > Akkadian *kiškattû*, to allow a development *Ĝešša* > *Kišša*. Thus, after Lambert’s 1990 article and with the consent of others³⁸⁾ it seemed well established that the logogram GIŠ.KUŠU₂^{ki} could be read either as *Umma* or *Kišša/Kissa*, the latter representing a later (or variant) form of ĝeš-ša₃. This seemed so well established that the reading *Kišša* for GIŠ.KUŠU₂^{ki} has even been used in a text edition (George 2018, 15 fn. 15, explaining it casually as “a part of Umma”).

Gianni Marchesi³⁹⁾ correctly falsified the hypothesis of Lambert (1990), Selz (2003) and others that GIŠ.KUŠU₂^{ki} should be read “*Kissa/Kišša*” and equal ĝeš-ša₃. First, *k* and *ĝ* were distinct phonemes in Old Babylonian Sumerian. Secondly, the logogram GIŠ.KUŠU₂^{ki} (= *Umma*, but allegedly “*Kissa*”) and ĝeš-ša₃ appear side by side in the same texts had observed this but did not draw the correct conclusions); ĝeš-ša₃ thus simply cannot be understood as a syllabic writing of the logogram GIŠ.KUŠU₂^{ki}. Thirdly, the logogram GIŠ.KUŠU₂^{ki} = *Umma* ends in a semivowel (Marchesi: *y*), as forms of the genitive show (GIŠ.KUŠU₂^{ki}-a in Ent. 28 iii 36(?), iv 21, vi 9, both without -a in Ent. 29; note also the locative GIŠ.KUŠU₂^{ki}-a in USP 70: 7), whereas ĝeš-ša₃-g ends in -g according to the personal name ^dnin-ĝeš-ša₃-ga (Ur III Umma).

Therefore:

(2) GIŠ.KUŠU₂^{ki} ≠ ĝeš-ša₃-g, the latter a toponym of religious relevance

Haider Oraibi Almamori (2014a) discussed the problem that no ancient place name has been known for the enormous Early Dynastic city at the site of Umm al-Aqarib. His assumption that the city name of *Umma* (GIŠ.KUŠU₂^{ki}) was transferred from Umm al-Aqarib to Jokha at some time, perhaps in the Sargonic period, can not be substantiated by any evidence. The Šu-Suen inscription found in the Šara temple proves that by the Ur III period, Jokha was *Umma*, and nothing suggests a break in the settlement during the preceding periods.⁴⁰ Furthermore, the transfer of place names from one city to another is not known in Early Mesopotamia, and therefore the thesis of the wandering city-name Umma can reasonably not be upheld. Perhaps Umm al-Aqarib was 𒂍𒀭𒂗𒂊⁴¹, the geographical name combined with lugal “king” in the royal title of the Umma rulers (lugal 𒂍𒀭𒂗𒂊)?⁴² Note that in a perhaps comparable way, rulers of “Lagaš” (al Hiba) resided in Ĝirsu (Tello). The reading of the city name 𒂍𒀭𒂗𒂊, however, remains unknown.

We may add:

- (3) The name of the ancient city at Umm al-Aqarib is unknown; $\text{HI} \times \text{DI} \check{\text{S}}$ remains a possible candidate.

A reading *Kiš/s...* of the logogram $\text{GI} \check{\text{S}}. \text{KU} \check{\text{S}} \text{U}_2^{\text{ki}}$ appears only in the Diri lists cited above as Text 1 and there, it is combined with the correct reading *Umma*.⁴³ Otherwise, as already mentioned, *Keši*, *Kesi*, or *Kessa* are readings of $\text{UD}. \text{KU} \check{\text{S}} \text{U}_2^{\text{ki}}$. In first-millennium litanies, the city of Keš, the old third-millennium centre of the mother-goddess, was written also with the sign combination for $\text{UD}. \text{KU} \check{\text{S}} \text{U}_2^{\text{ki}}$ (otherwise *Akšak*).⁴⁴ If one follows Lambert (1990) and restores the Diri entries (Text 1) as *Kiš[ša]/Kis[sa]*, can one postulate a conflation in the lexical series Diri already in the Old Babylonian version?⁴⁵ In this respect, it may be relevant that $\text{UD}. \text{KU} \check{\text{S}} \text{U}_2^{\text{ki}}$ does not appear at all in the Diri lists⁴⁶, although many UD combinations are preserved in Diri. Does that suggest that the Diri tradition – and only the Diri tradition in all cuneiform literature – mixed up the two place names $\text{UD}. \text{KU} \check{\text{S}} \text{U}_2^{\text{ki}} = \text{Akšak}$ or *Keš* and $\text{GI} \check{\text{S}}. \text{KU} \check{\text{S}} \text{U}_2^{\text{ki}} = \text{Umma}$, and that the reading *Keši/Kissa* was then listed under $\text{GI} \check{\text{S}}. \text{KU} \check{\text{S}} \text{U}_2^{\text{ki}}$? Such hypothetical reconstructions may be of little value without further supporting evidence.

Concerning line b+148 in the Balaḡ lament *Immal gude* (Text 2), $\text{UD}. \text{KU} \check{\text{S}} \text{U}_2^{\text{ki}}$ glossed as *ki/ke-sa* may be better explained as writing for the city-name *Keši/Keš*.⁴⁷ The Euršaba temple was a temple of the divine mother Lisin, and this fits well for Keš as cult place of the mother goddess.⁴⁸ The *Kesa* of Lambert's 1990 paper thus is a first-millennium literary (and perhaps lexical) writing for *Keš*, the city of the mother goddess, modern Tulūl al-Baqarāt⁴⁹ reconstructed reading of *Kiš/s...* to *Kiš[ša]/Kis[sa]* in the above-cited Diri entries concerning $\text{GI} \check{\text{S}}. \text{KU} \check{\text{S}} \text{U}_2^{\text{ki}} = \text{Umma}$ (Text 1) can not be substantiated by additional arguments beyond the shared element $\text{KU} \check{\text{S}} \text{U}_2$ in the two place names.

To summarise:

- (4) $\text{UD}. \text{KU} \check{\text{S}} \text{U}_2^{\text{ki}} = \text{Akšak}$ and *Keši/Kesi/Kessa* (Borger 2004 no. 611)
 (5) *Keši/Kesi/Kessa*, the city of Keš (modern Tulūl al-Baqarāt), written $\text{KE} \check{\text{S}}_3^{\text{ki}}$, but also $\text{UD}. \text{KU} \check{\text{S}} \text{U}_2^{\text{ki}}$ in first-millennium texts, was also the city of the Euršaba temple of Lisin (Text 2 above)
 (6) *Umma* = $\text{GI} \check{\text{S}}. \text{KU} \check{\text{S}} \text{U}_2^{\text{ki}}$ is in Old Babylonian and first-millennium Diri lists (Text 1 above) explained in the "Akkadian" column as *ki-iš/is-...*, but the restoration of the word and its interpretation remain unknown.

With the evidence at our disposal now, one should therefore better exclude a place name *Keši/Kesi/Kessa* or "*Kissa/Kišša*" from discussions concerning the names of Umma, Jokha, and Umm al-Aqarib.

Footnotes:

Figures

Fig. 1: Plan of the Šara Temple of Umma. Base map by the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage, Iraq, Expedition 1999 to 2002. Graphic adaptation by Manfred Lerchl (2024).

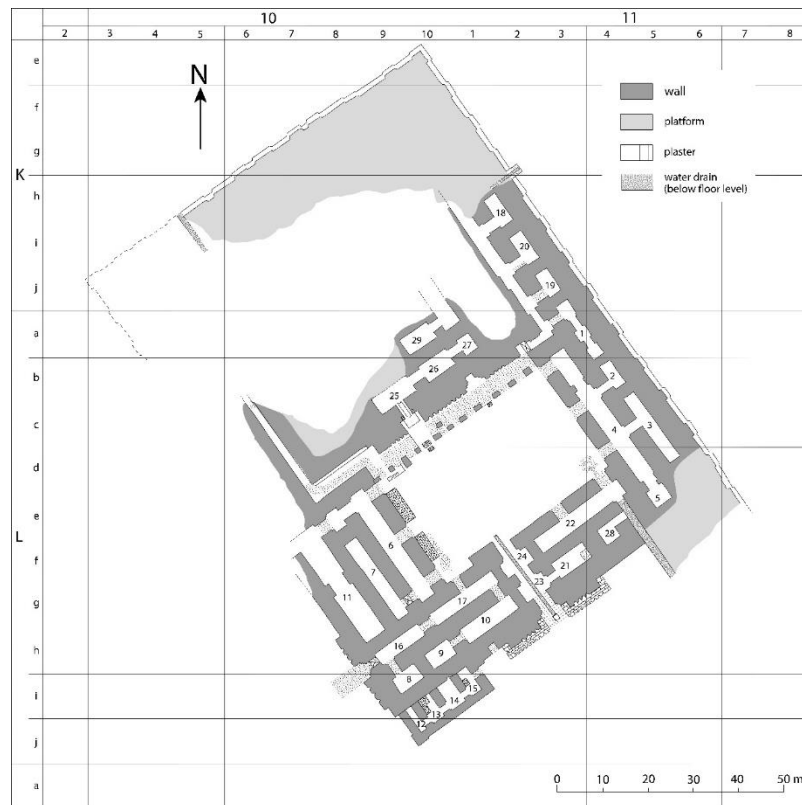


Fig. 2: Photo of Door-Socket No. Um.1033, IM. 163368, from Shara Temple, Room no. 20



Fig. 3: the texts of the Door-Socket no. 1033



Fig. 4 a: Photo of the the Find-spot of the Door-Socket No. Um.2634, IM. 176171, from Shara Temple, Room 21.



Fig. 4 a: The Text of the Door-Socket Um. 3634.



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- 4) Al-Mutawalli N./Kh. S. Ismael/W. Sallaberger (2019): Bullae from the Shara temple. Cuneiform texts from the Iraqi excavations at Umma 2. Wiesbaden
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- 16) George 1993, 18
- 17) Huber-Vulliet, F. (2009): Šara, in: M. P. Streck (ed.), Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie. Berlin/New York 12, 31–34
- 18) Krebern timer, M./J. J.W. (2020) Lisman: The Sumerian zame hymns from Tell Abū Šalābīh. Dubsar 12. Münster
- 19) Fahad and Abbas 2020
- 20) Krebern timer, M./J. J.W. (2020) Lisman: The Sumerian zame hymns from Tell Abū Šalābīh. Dubsar 12. Münster
- 21) Huber-Vulliet, F. (2009): Šara, in: M. P. Streck (ed.), Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie. Berlin/New York 12, 31–34
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- 23) Al-Mutawalli et al. 2019.
- 24) see Al-Mutawalli et al. 2024, 5
- 25) RIM E1.12.6; Frayne 2008, 371–372.
- 26) e.g. Borger 2010, no. 896.
- 27) The edition of Civil (2004, 56, 4:09) reads “GIŠ.ÚH.KI”, but the “ÚH” (= UD.KUŠU₂) in the text is clearly a typo for ÚH (the sign read here KUŠU₂) after the copy of the tablet by I.L. Finkel in MSL 15 fig. 1.
- 28) Kienast, B./W. Sommerfeld (1994): Glossar zu den altakkadischen Königsinschriften des Dritten Jahrtausends v. Chr. Freiburger altorientalische Studien 8. Stuttgart
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- (40) Al-Mutawalli (2009, 64) refers to the find of Early Dynastic seals at Umma. Hulínek et al. (2020) report finds from the Early Dynastic IIIb period in Umma/Jokha.
- 41) Frayne D. R. (2008): *Presargonic Period (2700–2350 BC). The royal inscriptions of Mesopotamia, early periods 1*. Toronto.
 - (42) The Early Dynastic rulers of Umma Enakale, Il, and Ĝeššakidu were named lugal 𒂍𒀭𒀭 in inscriptions from the state of Umma, but 𒂍𒀭𒀭 GIŠ.KUŠU₂ki in inscriptions from Ĝirsu and in archival texts from the Umma region. In my opinion, Haider Oraibi Almamori (2014) excluded this place name too quickly from his study; the disappearance of the place name 𒂍𒀭𒀭 after the Early Dynastic period when also Umm al-Aqarib was not settled any more adds to the plausibility of this identification.
 - (43) The early history of the sign combination to write the name of the city of Umma would deserve more study. Lambert (1990, 77) discusses the Uruk sign form with which the name of Umma was written. Almamori (2014, 5–6) points to variants of the writing of GIŠ.KUŠU₂ki: in the subscript of CUSAS 14 243, the city of Ušurdu is not absolutely clear, perhaps UŠ.KI.ŠE₃ (as read by Almamori l.c.), perhaps 𒂍𒀭𒀭 GIŠ.KUŠU₂ki-še₃; he also cites variant writings as GIŠ.KI.KUŠU₂ or GIŠ.KUŠU₂.KASKAL.KI in Sargonic texts and proposed phonetic readings of the sign groups.
 - (44) Borger 2004, 166 no. 611 refers to Meißner (1910, 351) n.6070: CT 16 36: 3 = SBH 126 no. 81: 2 = Udughul XII 44, 129 (Geller reads Keš₃): *ke-e-ši/si*; Deimel 1932, 757 = ŠL 392, 12 notes as readings for UD.KUŠU₂ki a) Akšak, b) Upê, c) Keš, with the readings *ke-e-ši*, *ke-es-sa*, [*k*]*e-e-s[i]*, going back to Weissbach (1899, 666).
 - (45) Lambert (1990) had assumed a conflation as well namely that UD.KUŠU₂ki in the litany stood for GIŠ.KUŠU₂ki because of their shared reading *kišša/kessa*. He was, however, not able to explain convincingly the presence of Lisin in Umma.

46) see Civil 2004, 208 index.

(47) The standard orthography for the city name Keš is attested in Diri IV 85: *ke-e-eš*
ŠU₂.AN.ĤI×GAD.KI.

(48) In literary texts, the temple of the mother-goddess Nindur is usually called the “palace of Keš”, *e₂-gal keš₃ki*; see George 1993, 108 no. 578

49) Lippolis, C./M. Viano (2016): “It is indeed a city, it is indeed a city! Who knows its interior?”. The historical and geographical setting of Tūlūl [sic] al-Baqarat. Some preliminary remarks, *Mesopotamia* 51, 143–146.

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