A RYLANDS CUNEIFORM TABLET CONCERNING THE CONQUEST OF KISH UNDER AGGA, BY GILGAMESH.

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THE important Sumerian tablet here published is the property of the John Rylands Library in which it has lain for more than twenty-five years. It has not been possible to discover in what ancient site in Mesopotamia it was found.

Mr. Gadd of the British Museum suggested that the writer might find some parallel to the Rylands text in the recent publication of the late Dr. Edward Chiera: *Sumerian Epics and Myths.* A search through the copies of tablets in Chiera’s volume revealed a text¹ which contained lines similar to some lines on the Rylands tablet. Further, that Chiera’s text contained, as he himself noted in his introduction to the volume, lines similar to lines in a tablet published in 1917 by Professor Langdon.² An examination of all three texts showed that the Rylands tablet has lines common to the tablet of Chiera or of Langdon or of both, and lines not found on either. The details are these:

Rylands Obverse, I, 4-10 = Langdon, Obverse, 4-9.
I, 14 = Langdon, Obverse, 14.
Reverse, I, 2-14 = Chiera, 23-35.
II, 1 = Chiera, 53.
II, 2 = Chiera, 52 ³
3-4 = Chiera, 54-55.

¹ No. 29.
² PBS. X. 2, No. 5.
Unfortunately the tablet is broken, the measurements of the fragment are these:

Obverse: col. I, 2 1/2 inches at widest; col. II, 2 inches at widest.
length of line dividing the two columns, 3 1/2 inches.

Reverse: col. I, 2 1/2 inches wide
col. II, 1 1/2 inches wide
length of line dividing the columns: 3 inches.

Of column II (reverse), the blank measures 2 inches.

What we should like to know is how many lines have gone with the broken pieces of our tablet. We cannot assume that the number of lines on our tablet was the same as that on the other two tablets where these duplicate our tablet. Hence it would be wrong to calculate from the comparative table of the Reverse given above, that there were between line 14 of col. I (Chiera line 35) and line 1 of col. II (= Chiera line 53) 53 minus 35 lines. Equally, that on the Obverse between line 14 of col. I (= Langdon 14) and line 1 of col. II (= Langdon 17) there were 17 minus 14 lines. And it should be noted further that our tablet is not merely a duplicate of certain lines of the other two tablets, for it has entire lines peculiar to itself.

It is clear that matter of the three tablets is the same. But there are variations and it is the variations that give to each tablet its special value. It is not possible, perhaps, to decide which of the three accounts is the earliest. The form of the cuneiform writing on the Rylands tablet may appear to some to give it a slight priority in time over the other two, say end of the 3rd millennium B.C. In order to show at a glance the variations between the Rylands tablet and those of Chiera and Langdon, it seemed good to transliterate not only the Rylands tablet but also the parallel lines of the other two. Unless I err, those two tablets have never been transliterated by the scholars who edited them or by others.

The copy of the text and the transliterations have been submitted to the eminent Sumerian scholar, Fr. Maurus Witzel, O.F.M., Professor of Assyriology at the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Rome. He not only improved on my transliteration,
but urged the immediate publication of the tablet about which he writes:

"Die Bedeutung des vorliegenden Textes liegt darin, dass derselbe ein Duplikat ist zu einem äußerst interessanten und wichtigen Texte, so zwar, dass er Chieras Text und dessen Ergänzungen teilweise bestätigt, verstehen hilft, interessante Varianten bietet und in verschiedenen Punkten erweitert; vor allem bietet er uns den Anfang der Erzählung, so dass die ganze Episode ziemlich luckenlos wird.

"Der Text handelt von der Eroberung der Stadt Kisch (und somit vom Ende der Ersten Kisch-Dynastie) durch Uurukunter Gilgamesh; dieser wird als Zeitgenosse des letzten Königs der Dynastie von Kisch, Agga, des Sohnes Enmebargesis, erwiesen."

The interpretation of the text, given above in summary by Fr. Witzel, is certain. But, to me at least, the circumstances of the conquest of Kish described in the text are not clear. Such texts as this one are notoriously difficult to translate and the most and best I can do with prudence is to make an exact copy and tolerable transliteration of the tablet, for the use of others more competent.

It remains to place the event recorded on the Rylands tablet in its setting in the traditional history of the land called "Sumer." The traditions of the earliest kingdoms have been preserved on the so-called King Lists. The most important of these is in the Ashmolean Museum and was published by Professor Langdon in vol. II of Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Texts, as WB. 444. First come the antedeluvian kings, eight in number, "they ruled 241,200 years. The deluge came upon the land. After the deluge had come rulership which descended from heaven. At Kish there was rulership." Thus is introduced the First Dynasty of Kish, whose twenty-first and twenty-second kings are Enmenbargigur (written most clearly in the Rylands tablet "Enmebargiesi") and Agga. With Agga ends the list of the kings of the First Dynasty of Kish, after which, according to WB. 444, "rulership passed to Eanna" whose kings, twelve in number, form the First Dynasty of Erech. The fifth king of
this dynasty was Gilgamesh the hero of the great Epic of Gilgamesh. This same Gilgamesh is the hero of the struggle recorded on the Rylands tablet. The main item of news is that he was contemporary of Agga the last king of Kish I., under whom rulership ceased. It has long been suspected that Kish I and Erech I were in part contemporary. Here we have a tradition in writing that the fifth king of Erech I was contemporary with the last king of Kish I. And that is news.

The question of the absolute and the relative chronology of these dynasties is one of the big problems of Sumerian history. Some think Erech I must be put in the fifth millennium B.C.; others, in as late as the third. It is something to have the local tradition, as represented in the Rylands tablet, of the relative chronology of Kish and Erech.

I wish to thank Fr. Maurus Witzel for his great help and Dr. Guppy, the librarian of the Rylands Library, for ready permission to publish in the BULLETIN.

TRANSLITERATION.

Obverse, Column I.

1 / / /-gi₄-a ag-ga dumu en-me-bár-gi₄-e-si-gé
// /-ta dGiš-gibil-ga-meš-ra Unu₄¹-šù mu-un(?)-si-lah-es
// /-Giš-gibil-ga-meš igit-ab-ba-uru-na-ka
// /-ba-an-gar gu-ni-tuk lugal-e
2 gu-ba-an-gar gu-ni-tuk / / / / / / / / / /
5. // // /-li-da PÚ kalam til-ti-li-da
PU-til-li-da PÚ kalam-til-ti-// / / /
// / /-tur-da kalam til-ti-li-da
giš-gar-tur-da kalam til-ti-li-da
//, //, // da túg-lal til-ti-li-da
PU u da túg-lal til-ti-li-da

¹ Perhaps kin-gi₄-a as on Chiera, left edge lú kin-gi₄-a Ag-ga.
² The italicised lines are duplicates; those on Obverse are from Langdon, those on Reverse are from Chiera; see comparative table set out above.
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?-gar-ra guruš-uru-ki-na-ka "Giš-gibil-ga-meš mu-un-na / / / / /
/ / /-li-da PÚ kalam til-til-li-da
/ / /-tur-da kalam-til-til-li-da
/ / /-da túg-lal til-til-li-da
/ / / Kiški1-šù gu-nam-ba-gá-gá-an-dé-en / / /-ga-am ib-
sig-gi-en-dé-en
é-Kiški1-a gu-nam-ba-an-gar-ri en-si-en gišku nam-ba-an-
sig-gi-dé-en

15. / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / meš en-Kullabki1-a-gé
/ / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / gál-la-e
/ / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / ma-gid

Obverse, Column II.
dingir-gal-gal-e-ne me-? -ba-bi ba-an-a[g] / / / / / /
dingir-gal-gal-e-ne me-(erasure)-bi ba-an-ag-eš-âm
bád-gal im-mi-aš ki-uš-sa-a-ba
bád-gal bád an-ni ki-uš-sa
ki-dur-maḫ an-ni gar-ra-a-ba
ki-dur-maḫ an-ni gar-ra-ni
sag mu-e-sum za-e lugal ur-sag-me-en
sag mu-e-sum za lugal ur-sag-bi

5. sag-LUM-LUM-nun an-ni-?-ne?
sag-LUM-LUM-nun an-ni gar-ra-ni
aras-a-[n]i-gim [n]i-[m]u-ni-in-te
aras-a-ni-ta-a-gim ni-ba-an-te
ud-bi al-tur a-ga-bi-ta al-bir-ri[i]
ud-bi al-tur a-ga-bi-ta al-bir-ri
lú-bi-NE igi-nu-mu-un-da/- / / / / /
lú-bi-NE igi-nu-mu-da-us?-gu-uš
THE CONQUEST OF KISH UNDER AGGA

ud-bi-a ³Giš-gibil-ga-meš en-
ud-bi-a ³Giš-gibil-ga-meš en-Kullab\(^1\)-gé

10. ṣ-guruš uru-na-šu ḫar-ra-ni-
na-šu ša-ga-ni an-dul ṣ-har-ra-ni ba-an-du
arad-da-ni en-ki-šár-ra gù-mu-na-
ni en-ki-šár-ra gù-mu-na-dug₄-e
ne-šu šukra á mé sa ḫe-
ne-šu šukra á mé sa ḫe-im-mi-gi₄

\(\text{giš}^3\) ku ag-á-zu ḫe-mi-zu
\(\text{giš}^3\) ku ag-da-zu ḫe-mi-im-gi₄
nî-gal me-lám-ma ḫe-
nî-gal me-lám-ma ḫe-im-dim-dim-gal

15. e-ne ara₃-a-ni-ta nî-gal
e-ne ara₃-a-ni-ta nî-gal GAB i-lu šuš
dîm-ma-a-ni ḫe-
dîm-ma-ni ḫe-suḥ galga-a-ni ḫe-bir-ri
ud-nu-5-àm ud-
ud-nu-5-àm ud-nu-10-àm
ag-ga dumu
ag-ga dumu En-me-[b]är-gi₄-e-si unu\(^1\) zag-ga ba-an-dab-
bi-eš

**Reverse, Column I.**

bir-bir-tur-ri
bir-bir-tur-ri lil₃ gin-ni mu-ni-in-gaz-gaz-ne
egir-zabar-ku
giš-ne
unu-ba tur-tur-lá Kullab\(^1\)-a-gé
bar-ba tur-tur Kullab\(^1\)-gé me-bil ne-ib-sig

5. guruš unu\(^1\) -ga-gé PA. KU ?-ag ? šu-ne-ne ne-
guruš unu\(^1\) -ga-gé giš-ba-ag á-ne-ne ne-in-dab
giš-iš KÁ-gal-la-gé tar-ba ne-in-
giš-iš KÁ-gal-la-ka tar-ba ne-in-du

\(^1\) The sign is clearly unu; the copy is faulty.

23
en-ki-šár KÁ-gal-aš ba-ra-è
en-ki-šár KÁ-gal-aš ba-ra-è

10. e[ri] lú-še lugal-zu-ù
eri lú-še lugal-zu-u
lú-še lugal-mu ni-me-a
lugal-mu
ne-in-dúg4-ga-gím nam
ne-in-dúg4-ga-dím nam
šár-ra ba-an-šub-bu-uš-a šár-ra ba-an-šár-ri-eš-a
šár-ra ba-an-šub-bu-uš šár-ra ba-an-zi-gi-eš
šár-ra sahar-ra ba-an-šár-ri-eš-àm
šár-ra sahar-ra ba-an-da-šár-ri-eš

15. kur-kur dù-a-bi ba-an-da-šú-àm
kur-kur-ri dù-a-bi ba-an-da-šú

REVERSE, Column II.

// // Babbar-dúr-šù ud-bi-ta e-ra-an-gi4
igi Babbar-šù-[d]úr ud-bi-ta e-ra-an-gi4
// // // // // // /-bl] (or [g]a) Kiš1 Šù šu-ba-ni-in-ba2
// // -gibil-ga-meš en-Kullabk1-a-gé
"Giš-gibil-ga-meš en-Kullabk1-gé
// // // /-zu dug-ga-àm
zag-sal-zu dug-ga-àm

1 The original has a clear Kiš.
2 Is this a variant of Chiera, line 52: "Ag-ga Kiš1 Šù / šu-ba-ni-in-šu."
THE CONQUEST OF KISH UNDER AGGA  369

PLATE I.

Obverse.  I.
THE CONQUEST OF KISH UNDER AGGA

PLATE III.

REVERSE. I.
PLATE IV.

Reverse. II.