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Wooden Wax-Covered Writing Boards as *Vorlage* for *kudurru* Inscriptions in the Middle Babylonian Period

<https://doi.org/10.1515/janeh-2021-0008>

Published online October 12, 2022

Abstract: The inscriptions on Middle Babylonian *kudurru* monuments contain references to a certain type of *Vorlage*, wooden wax-covered writing boards. The *kudurru* monuments were erected in temples as (legal) proof of a royal land grant. In this article I explore three ways in which wooden wax-covered writing boards may have functioned as a *Vorlage* for *kudurru* inscriptions. Wooden wax-covered writing boards may have served as a *Vorlage* for literary passages, as a draft for the *kudurru* inscription or as a writing material for land survey documents (possibly the Middle Babylonian *ammatu* documents). Firstly, parallels between the colophons of *kudurru* inscriptions and first millennium literary and scholarly texts imply a shared scholarly practice in a temple context, in which wooden wax-covered writing boards were used as a *Vorlage*. Secondly, the use of wooden wax-covered writing boards to draft monumental inscriptions is well attested in the 1st millennium BC. Thirdly, I propose that writing boards may have been used to record the land survey necessary for the royal land grant, since land surveys and ground plans were traditionally recorded on writing boards in Mesopotamia. Wooden wax-covered writing boards and wooden writing materials became more widespread in the Middle Babylonian period. The Middle Babylonian land survey document was called *ammatu* document. Further, in this article I demonstrate that the equation of the Middle Babylonian *ammatu* document with the Old Babylonian *tuppi ummātim*, a term for title deeds written on clay tablets, is problematic.

Keywords: wooden wax-covered writing boards, land survey, writing materials, colophon, Middle Babylonian

I would like to thank Jacob L. Dahl (Oxford), Stephanie Dalley (Oxford), and Gösta I. Gabriel (Berlin) for their valuable suggestions and helpful advice. Further, I extend my sincere appreciation to the anonymous reviewers for their thoughtful, insightful, and constructive evaluation of my manuscript. All errors remain, as usual, my own.

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1 Introduction

In ancient Iraq in the Middle Babylonian period (1500–1000 BC)¹ wooden wax-covered writing boards may have played a role in the production of inscribed stone monuments called *kudurru*. A *kudurru* is a stela made of stone (or clay) that had the function to protect and confirm a royal land grant or a grant of a prebend (Brinkman 1983: 268–271). It was placed in a temple to grant divine protection of the grant, and contained elaborate curses against transgressors, such as provincial governors attempting to return land back into the provincial administration. The *kudurrus* were put in locations where they could be easily seen and read, making the grantee's rights as an owner of property known to the public. Thus, moving them within the temple to a more secluded location (e.g., to a *ašar lā amāri*, 'the place of not-seeing', or a *bīt asakki/ekleti*, 'an inaccessible/dark room'), hiding them or destroying them would invoke curses on the transgressor (Oelsner 2002: 544; Paulus 2014: 222).

The monumentalisation² in the form of the *kudurrus* was the last step in the transposition of information about a land grant: from oral proclamations, to the issuance of legal documents on clay, and to the final integration of written records in the stone monument (Paulus 2014: 91–104). The *kudurrus* have the following characteristics which classify them as a monument:³ they were intended monuments, which were erected in a special place, i.e., in a public building with a religious meaning, the temple (*Ortsmonumentalität*), with an intended permanence. They function as permanent reminders of an event (the royal land grant) and had a clear perceptual impact and social and legal implications for the reader of the inscription - they functioned not only as legal proof, but also incorporated transcendental aspects (divine punishment in the case of transgression).

1 The regnal years of kings are based on Brinkman 2017: 36.

2 See Levenson's (2019: 17–40) discussion of the concept of monumentality with further literature.

3 Levenson (2019: 23) lists several factors that influence whether a building or object is a monument: size, position, permanence, investment, and complexity. Levenson (2019: 22) also discusses other characteristics, which help define something as a monument: "perceptual impact on a personal or cultural level or a personal or cultural investment in the monument", the impression of the society that created and/or lived with the monument, "space and position" (*Ortsmonumentalität*) as well as events that make a place special. Further, he distinguishes between intended monumentality, the "perceived monumentality or social meaning of a structure [which] differs between people or peoples", and "received monumentality", which is "the outside perception of the way monumentality is perceived" (Levenson 2019: 24). "[M]onumentality is a fluid and dynamic concept, which correlates strongly with the concept of cultural memory. [...] The result would thereby be not a mere calculation of labor costs but also a measurement of the social involvement in the construction." (Levenson 2019: 35)

In this paper, I examine the role and function of writing boards in the multi-stage production process of an inscribed *kudurru*. I focus on the *Vorlage* of the inscription, in the sense of ‘[a]n original version of a manuscript from which a copy is produced’ (Brown 1993/2: 3602a; Speake 1997: 468), and not on the monument itself. In section two, I summarise the legal process of a land grant, which lead to the erection of a *kudurru*. In section three I provide an overview of the general use of wooden wax-covered writing boards (henceforth called ‘writing boards’) in Mesopotamia. In section four I analyse the references to *Vorlages* on Middle Babylonian *kudurrus*. In sub Section 4.1 I discuss the inscriptions on two *kudurrus* which contain mentions of writing boards. In sub-section 4.2 I analyse the grammar and phraseology of colophons with a focus on the term GABA.RI/*gabarû*. There are stylistic parallels between the colophons on *kudurrus* and those at the end of literary and scholarly texts, and both mention writing boards among other types of *Vorlages*. Sub-section 4.3 concerns the evidence for the use of writing boards to draft the inscription (and its iconography). Finally, in sub Section 4.4 I suggest that the writing boards contained the so-called *ammatu*-document, which appears as a *Vorlage* on the Middle Babylonian *kudurrus*. In sub Section 4.4 I also address the problematic equation of the *ammatu* document with the OB *ṭuppi ummātim*. In the light of the evidence for the traditional use of writing boards in Mesopotamia to record land surveys and ground plans, I propose that the *ammatu* document could have been written on a writing board.

In the conclusion I summarise my findings: there are parallels between the references to a *Vorlage* which appear on *kudurrus* and in the colophons of literary and scholarly texts. However, there is no direct implication that the literary parts of a *kudurru* inscription, such as narrative introductions, and curse and blessing formulas, were copied from writing boards. Evidence from the Neo-Assyrian (ca. 911–612 BC) period also hints at the use of writing boards as drafts for the inscription of Neo Assyrian monumental inscriptions. We also have to consider the possibility that the results of land surveys were recorded on writing boards, as this was a tradition in Mesopotamia since the third millennium BC. The land survey preceded the erection of a *kudurru* and writing boards would have been an intermediate medium in the production of the final inscription.

2 The Legal Process of a Land Grant

The legal process of granting land culminated in the production of the *kudurru* monument,⁴ but it also involved the issuance of several sealed legal documents. The

⁴ A number of Middle Babylonian and early Neo-Babylonian *kudurru* monuments imply that they were erected after a legal dispute over property (see Brinkman 1983: 268–269). Consequently, the original royal land grant was confirmed and protected via the erection of a *kudurru* (for examples

process of land grants by Kassite (ca. 1500–1150 BC) and Isin II kings (1157–1026 BC; Brinkman 1976: 32–33, fn. 89; idem 2017: 1–2, 29, 36) can be deduced from the mentions of the *Vorlage* on the monuments themselves (see Brinkman 1983: 270; idem 2006: 7).⁵ Brinkman (1983: 270) observed that the phraseology of *kudurru* inscriptions from the first millennium, i.e. the Isin II or early Neo-Babylonian *kudurru* inscriptions, “grew closer to that of the legal text; and, in many instances, a colophon was added to the *kudurru* stating that it was a copy of the king’s sealed document of administration (*gabari kunuk šarri ša šiprēti*)”. These colophons mentioning one or several *Vorlages* for the *kudurru* inscription are important for the reconstruction of the legal process of the land grant. In order to understand at which point in the legal process the writing boards may have been used, I shall first provide you with a *short* summary of the legal procedures as reconstructed by Paulus (for an elaborate analysis see Paulus 2014, especially pp. 91–104) (Table 1):

Table 1: The legal process of a land grant.

Step 1	First, the land was granted by the king to an individual. The king proclaimed the grant in the presence of a number of high ranking supraregional officials (Paulus 2014: 95, 105–115). ⁶
Step 2	In the second step the ‘sealed document of the king of the instructions’ ⁷ (the <i>kanik šarri ša šiprēti</i>) was issued by the king. It contained the grant by the king, and the instructions that the king gave to the provincial officials to allocate land to the grantee. The execution of the royal grant was performed by local authorities, i.e., the provincial administration. The king sent royal officials to the provinces. The granted land was designated as A.ŠĀ še- <i>pir-ti</i> , ‘the land of the instruction’ (see Paulus 2012: 366). The legal document containing proof of the donation (result of step 1), and the sealed document of the king of the instructions (<i>kanik šarri ša šiprēti</i> , result of step 2) served as a <i>Vorlage</i> for the legal part of the <i>kudurru</i> , i.e., they contained information about the involved parties, and the object of the donation itself.

see Paulus 2014: 116–119). However, there is ample information that *kudurru* monuments were often erected without any indication of a legal dispute over property. Thus, it is likely that the erection of a *kudurru* monument was the final step of the legal process (for a detailed analysis of the function of the *kudurru* monuments see Paulus 2014: 217–260).

5 “But the narrative portion of the *kudurru*, concerned as it was with a legal transaction, had to be based on a sealed legal document written on clay. [...] The sealed clay document was the formal legal proof or registration of the transaction; it was kept in the custody of the owner of the property. The *kudurru*, on the other hand, was a documentary monument intended to strengthen or confirm the efficacy for display.” (Brinkman 1983: 269–270)

6 This act appears to have usually taken place at the royal court, often in Babylon (Paulus 2014: 105), and did not always result in a legal document of proof.

7 In this article I use the literal translation; note, however, that Brinkman 1983: 270 translates it more elegantly as ‘the king’s sealed document of administration’.

Table 1: (continued)

Step 3	The land survey was conducted; it was an obligatory part of the land grant. A lack of a survey made the donation legally void (Paulus 2014: 102). Through the act of the land survey the land grant was undertaken locally, i.e., confirmed (Akkadian <i>kunnu</i>). During the land survey both supraregional royal officials and local officials were present as witnesses. Following the land survey, the king issued and sealed an <i>ammatu</i> document (Charpin 2002: 178; Paulus 2014: 102–104). The measurements and location of the donated land were copied from the <i>ammatu</i> document onto the <i>kudurru</i> .
Step 4	Only then a <i>kudurru</i> was produced. However, sometimes a few years could pass until the stone monument was deposited in a temple (Paulus 2014: 104–105).

3 The Use of Wax and Clay as Writing Material in Mesopotamia

The primary writing material in Mesopotamia was clay.⁸ Cuneiform, a three-dimensional script invented about 3500 BC⁹ in southern Mesopotamia, was developed for the writing material clay. Thus, it has to be established why writing-boards were used, although the writing material clay was abundantly available. It has been suggested that wax-covered writing-boards were used for bookkeeping, i.e., for ongoing procedures, such as repetitive income and expenditures or attendance records, and in cases, in which long periods of time passed between entries (Hunger 1972–1975: 459; San Nicolò 1948: 65), such as astrological observations (Kugler 1907: 85; San Nicolò 1948: 65). It is only in the Neo- and Late-Babylonian period (mid first millennium BC) that we finally have ample evidence for the use of writing boards in the temple administration (Volk 1999: 287). These writing boards contained lists of agricultural land, temple personnel, silver/gold, rations, material issued for the preparations of food offerings and prebendary income, accounts of livestock, various agricultural dues, and income derived of house rentals (Jursa 2004: 172). For an overview of the history of writing boards in Mesopotamia, see the recent summaries in Cammarosano et al. 2019 and Cammarosano and Weirauch 2021.

Unlike the wax-ochre/orpiment mixture used to fill writing boards, clay dries in the Iraq climate in under an hour, if it is not kept under a wet cloth. According to Taylor (2011: 311, 313) and San Nicolò (1948: 66) it required effort to keep clay tablets

⁸ ‘Raw tablet clay was readily available in limitless quantities, at no cost, and required minimal preparation’ (Cartwright and Taylor 2011: 318). ‘The materiality of clay fundamentally shaped cuneiform culture, enabling tamper-proof preservation of the written word but discouraging lengthy writings or documentation that required frequent updating’ (Radner and Robson 2011: 2).

⁹ See Edzard 1976–1980: 544–549; Englund 2004: 26 n. 4; Schmandt-Besserat 1992; 1996.

moist and soft over a long period of time. ‘Adding water to a dried tablet will not return it to a properly plastic state, but will turn it to sludge (a process known as “slaking down”)’ (Cartwright and Taylor 2011: 313). Taylor does not believe that Mesopotamian scribes remoistened their tablets. Most Assyriologists will have come across erased signs on cuneiform tablets. These corrections were probably applied quickly to the still moist clay while the scribe was in the process of writing a text. For all three millennia of Mesopotamian history, there are attestations of scribes attempting to inscribe a clay tablet after it had dried. The last columns or lines of large accounts and inventories from the Ur III period (such as CUSAS 39, nos. 41 and 135) were sometimes entirely written on (nearly) dried clay (Dahl 2020: 75–81, 195–196). In one field survey text from Girsu (BM 12391, Cartwright and Taylor 2011: 311) the measurements were apparently written earlier than the yields of each field. Thus, the impressions of the yields are extremely faint, as the clay had already dried when the yields were added. These examples show that it was more practical to use wax instead of clay, if entries had to be added to an account after a long period of time. Some colophons of library texts from the Library of Assurbanipal from the first millennium were even added in ink, as the clay was apparently too hard to impress wedges (K 10100, DT 273; Cartwright and Taylor 2011: 312). However, writing boards should not merely be considered as ‘an erasable writing technology’, which could be continuously updated and from which texts were later copied to a more durable clay tablet, since in the first millennium it is attested that writing boards served as a permanent medium for scholarly texts (Finke 2003: 58; Kozuh and Nielsen 2021: 148–149; Parpola 1983: 4; Robson 2019: 126). In Neo-Babylonian institutions running accounts, perhaps, those from the final stages of accounting, were most likely kept on durable writing boards, which were grouped thematically and put into reed boxes (Jursa 2004: 170–178; Kozuh and Nielsen 2021: 149–155).

Writing boards were more expensive to produce than clay tablets, because wood and beeswax had to be imported (Nemet-Nejat 2000: 251; San Nicolò 1948: 70; Symington 1991: 111),¹⁰ while the clay used for clay tablets was generally of local origin (Sallaberger 2014: 89; Cartwright and Taylor 2011: 318, fn. 100). Writing boards are commonly attested in the context of the palace and religious institutions (San Nicolò 1948: 62–3). They bear scholarly and literary works as well as administrative lists and accounts (San Nicolò 1948: 59–63; Volk 2014–2016: 612). Thus, we can assume that (state) institutions, such as temples and the palace, could afford the imported goods, wood and beeswax.

The fact that the state and temple institutions used writing boards is attested since the third millennium BC (San Nicolò 1948: 59–61, Steinkeller 2004: 75–6, fns.

¹⁰ ‘[W]ax was not available in large quantities during the third millennium, which in turn would speak against the widespread use of writing boards’ (Steinkeller 2004: 76, fn. 18).

17–18; Volk 1999: 287). According to these references (Steinkeller 2004: 75–6), writing boards were used to list conscripted workers and soldiers, incoming and outgoing goods, including the provision issued to workers, and to write down the results of land surveys (see below).

A connection between writing boards called **le-um** and ‘ground plans’ on wooden boards called **geš-hur** (see footnote 66 below), can be inferred from royal hymns of the late third and early second millennium BC. Large drawings or building plans would have required large, cumbersome and heavy clay tablets; a writing board with the same surface was much lighter, thinner, and less fragile. Thus, in the context of the state and temple administration, the advantages of writing on wax may have outweighed the disadvantages of producing a writing board, such as the high price (Meissner 1936; Powell 2003-2005: 609–11) and the efforts and cost of acquisition (transaction costs) of the raw materials.

4 The *Vorlage*

4.1 The Types of *Vorlage* for *kudurru* Inscriptions

4.1.1 Writing Boards as a *Vorlage* for *kudurru* Inscriptions

Later evidence from the Neo-Assyrian period (ca. 911–612 BC) points to the use of writing boards in the drafting of royal inscriptions on wall panels and statues (Howard 2017: 23, 107, 125–6).

Writing boards, as well as tablets, were used in the drafting stage of production of Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions. Indeed, this is to be expected. Writing boards could be easily transported and easily erased, allowing for correcting or scrapping drafts. They could be hinged together with a pin to form leaves in a sort of hinged ‘book,’ as the writing boards discovered at Nimrud show. If more room for a text was needed, then, more leaves could be added (Howard 2017: 126).

According to Howard (2017: 107), a royal scholar would produce a draft of a Neo-Assyrian royal inscription on a clay tablet or on a wooden writing board. This draft was presented to the king for his approval, and according to the king’s wishes new drafts were produced, eventually culminating in a master copy:

The master copy may have included instructions for scribes and/or artisans for the production of the final form of the composition, as well as any accompanying iconography and/or epigraphs. The master copy was then used to transmit the text of the composition to the final medium (Howard 2017: 23).

Writing boards were called *lē'u* in Akkadian (AHw: 546b-547a; CAD L: 156b–159b). Only two Middle Babylonian *kudurru* inscriptions contain the term *lē'u*, i.e., a reference to writing boards:¹¹ one Kassite period *kudurru* inscription and one colophon on a younger *kudurru* from the Isin II period:

- (a) the *kudurru* Ka IV 2¹² (original publication: MDP 2: 94) from the late Kassite king Kaštiliaš IV (1233–1225),
- (b) and the *kudurru* MŠZ 2 (museum number: IM 80908, Iraq Museum, Baghdad) from the Isin II-king Marduk-šāpik-zēri (1086–1074).

The *kudurru* of Kaštiliaš IV (1233–1225) shows that a writing board functioned as some sort of proof for a past donation, while the *kudurru* of king Marduk-šāpik-zēri (1086–1074) informs us that two documents are the basis for the text of the *kudurru*: a so called *šiprētu* document sealed by the king, and a writing board.

4.1.1.1 The *kudurru* KA IV 2 from the Late Kassite King Kaštiliaš IV (1233–1225)

The late Kassite *kudurru* from the reign of king Kaštiliaš IV (1233–1225 BC), Ka IV 2 ii 18'–28' contains two clear references to writing boards (ii 23', 26'). The surrounding lines, however, are only partially preserved, and the context is largely emended:

DUMU *up-pa*-[...] *kaš-ti*-[*li-ja-aš*] LUGAL [...] *im-ḥur*-[*šū*] *ù ga*-[*ba-re-e*] ^{GES}LE.[U₅,UM] LUGAL *ú*-[*kallim*?] ¹*ki*¹ *ga-ba*-[*re-e*] ^{GES}LE.[U₅,UM] [...] *i-mu*-¹*ú*¹-[*ma*]¹³ [...] ¹*a*¹-*na* ^d[...] -LUGAL-¹DIN-GIR¹. [MEŠ] *ki-a*-¹*am*¹ *iq*-¹*bu*¹-[*ú*],

¹¹ This is mentioned in Dalley 2020: 18 and Paulus 2014: 102, fn. 281, 587.

¹² The abbreviations Ka IV 2 and MŠZ 2 stem from Paulus' edition of Kassite *kudurru* inscriptions (Paulus 2014). See a review and a concordance of the published *kudurrus* in Weszeli 2015: 324–360.

¹³ I would like to thank Sara Arroyo Cuadra for letting me view high quality photos of Ka IV 2: ii 18'–28'. The latter half of the verb form in ii 28', *i-mu*-¹*ú*¹-[*ma*], is missing. The beginning of the last sign in ii 28', which looks like the sign ŠU, resembles the first part of the sign Ú in the preceding line ii 24'. Emendations to *i-mu*-¹*šū*¹-[*ma*] (*imūšu*[*ma*]) or *i-mu*-¹*ú*¹-[*ur*²/*ra*²/*ru*²-(*ma*)] (*imur*[*r(ū/a/ma)*]) are possible (the sign RA, which is attested on the same *kudurru* i 9, does not resemble the traces in this line). However, it is unlikely that *imurūma*, 'they looked (at it)', would be written with a lengthened preliminary vowel, although this tradition is attested in OB Larsa, the MA laws, and in some Amarna letters (Aro 1955: 29–31). On the other hand, the G-stem of *amū*, 'to argue in court', mainly appears in Old Akkadian (ca. 2350–2200 BC) sources (CAD A/2: 86, s.v. *amū*), and the meaning 'to talk about/to, discuss, consider, ponder/recite' is mostly attested in the Gt- and Št-stems (see von Soden, 1995: 149–153). In case *i-mu*-¹*ú*¹-[(-x)] is, indeed, a form of the verb *amāru* we would have to transcribe and translate the following: ¹*ki*¹ *gaba*[*rē*] *le*[*ʔ*] [...] *im*¹*u*¹ [*r(ū/am)ma*] [...] ¹*a*¹*na* ^d[...] -šar-¹*ilāni*¹ *kā*¹*am*¹ *iq*¹*bū*¹, 'After he/(they) had read the exemplar of the writing board, they said to [...] -šar-ilāni the following'.

The son of Uppa[...] approached Kašti[liaš], the king [...] and he [showed (?)] the king¹⁴ an 'exemplar' of a writing [board]. 'According to' the exemplar, a writing [board ...], (and) 'he/they spoke' [... he/they] 'said' the following to [...]šar-ilāni: (*kudurru* Ka IV 2 ii 18'–28')

The last syllable of the word *ga-ba*-[...] is notably broken off in Ka IV 2 ii 18'–28'. As the colophons in literary and scholarly texts and in *kudurru* inscriptions cited below show, an emendation to *ga-ba*-[re-e] is likely. This could express the *status constructus gaba[rē]*, i.e. *gaba[rē] lē'i*, 'a copy/an exemplar of a writing board', or it could express the accusative *gabarē* followed by an apposition in the accusative, i.e. *gaba[rē] lē'a*, 'an exemplar, a writing board'. Since *gabarū* can also mean 'copy', *gaba[rē] lē'i* may be a clay tablet, which contained a text copied from a writing board (= 'a copy of a writing board'). The writing material of this 'copy' is unknown. A root ending in the vowel *-e* leads to the accusative suffix *-a* to become *-e* (von Soden 1995: 98).

u[*kallim*]², 'he showed', is emended according to the Kassite *kudurru* KaE II 1 ii 6' of king Kadašman-Enlil II (1258–1250):

^{NA4}KIŠIB *ka-daš-man-túr¹-[gu ...] ka-daš-man-^den-^llil* [...] *ú-ka-al-li-im-^lma* [...] *ki-i* ^{NA4}KIŠIB¹, 'He showed the sealed document of Kadašman-Tur[gu] to Kadašman-Enlil, and according to the sealed document [...].' (*kudurru* KaE II 1 ii 4'–7')

In this fragmentary *kudurru* (KaE II 1) king Kadašman-Enlil II confirms the royal grant which his direct predecessor, king Kadašman-Turgu (1276–1259), had given to a grantee (Paulus 2014: 338–339). The grantee apparently shows the new king a document of proof: a tablet sealed by the previous king.

Due to the damage to the stone, it is unclear what was done with the writing boards in Ka IV 2 ii 18'–28': in the first instance, only the verbal prefix is preserved. Either the exemplar of the writing board is shown to the king or a new exemplar is inscribed (see footnote 13). The verb *kullumu* 'to show', which I emend here, is used in legal contexts when a document of proof is provided (CAD K: 521–523, s.v. *kullumu*). Paulus (2014: 361), however, emends *ú-[šaštir]²*, 'he has it written/copied/a monument inscribed' (*šušтуру*, CAD Š/2: 238–241, s.v. *šaṭāru*) in Ka IV 2: ii 24' (but translates 'he showed to the king' – perhaps a discarded emendation). *gaba[rā] lē'i šarri ušaštir*, 'he had inscribed an exemplar of the writing board of the king' would mean that the king had an exemplar of a writing board inscribed, perhaps to be used as a *Vorlage* for a new *kudurru*.

In the second instance, the verb form to be expected in the following line is not preserved: 'ki' *ga-ba*-[re-e] ^{GEŠ}LE.[U₅.UM] [...], 'According to' the copy of the

¹⁴ In ii 24 the term LUGAL may not be the indirect object of the assumed predicate *u*[*kallim*], but the dependent noun in a genitive construction ^{GEŠ}LE.[U₅.UM] LUGAL (Akkadian transcription: *lē'i šarri*), i.e. the 'writing board of the king' (ii 23'–24'), which follows the term *gabarū*.

writing [board ...]'. It is possible that *kī* is a conjunction introducing a subclause, 'After¹ [he/they had ...] the copy of the writing [board],' *i-mu-ú[ma]*, 'he/they spoke (about it)'¹ (Paulus 2014: 362). See footnote 13 above for a different possible emendation.

4.1.1.2 The *kudurru* MŠZ 2 from the Isin II-King Marduk-šāpik-zēri (1086–1074)

The second *kudurru* which contains a definite reference to a writing board is the *kudurru* MŠZ 2 of king Marduk-šāpik-zēri. In MŠZ 2, it is explicitly stated that writing boards served as the *Vorlage* of at least a part of the inscription: in the last lines of column v of the *kudurru* two types of documents, a *lē'u* and a *kanik šarri ša šiprēti*, are mentioned as a *Vorlage*:

GABA.RI^{GEŠ}LE.U₅.UM ù^{NA4}KIŠIB LUGAL.E ša šip-re-e-ti (*kudurru* MŠZ 2 v 15–16).

The translation could be '(The *Vorlages*) are exemplars of a writing board and of the sealed document of the king of the instructions' or '(This is) a copy of a writing board and of the sealed document of the king of the instructions'.¹⁵ Note that the name of the *narū* is given in the two preceding lines (v 13–14), which is further qualified with information about its *Vorlages* in v 15–16.

4.2 Stylistic Parallels Between the Colophons on *kudurru*s and in Literary and Scholarly Texts

In first millennium archives it is ubiquitously attested that scribes added a colophon¹⁶ to a copy of a literary or scholarly text, which they had copied either from a writing board or from other source material, most often from clay tablets. In the Isin II or early Neo Babylonian period it also became more common to include colophons in *kudurru* inscriptions (Brinkman 1983: 270).

The formula 'GABA.RI/*gabarē/ê* WM(s = writing material(s))', which is prevalent in first millennium colophons of literary and scholarly texts, also appears on colophons of *kudurru*s and *kudurru*-like textual artefacts from the end of the second and early first millennium BC. As demonstrated above (see above Sections 4.1.1.1 and 4.1.1.2), on one Kassite (Ka IV 2) and on one Isin II *kudurru* (MŠZ 2) the

¹⁵ Brinkman and Dalley (1988: 92, fn. 70) consider this to be hendiadys ('tablet and seal' for 'sealed tablet').

¹⁶ 'Ein Kolophon ist eine vom Text getrennte Notiz des Schreibers am Ende einer Tafel literarischen Inhalts, die Aussagen über diese Tafel und über Personen, die mit dieser Tafel zu tun haben, enthält' (Hunger 1968: 1).

phrase *gabarē lē'i*, ‘copy/exemplar of a writing board’, appears; once within the narrative of the legal part (Ka IV 2) and once in the colophon.

Paulus (2014: 587) suggests that the writing boards mentioned in the inscriptions on Middle Babylonian *kudurrus* contained narrative introductions (‘Königshymne’) and the-curse-and-blessing formulas, as she deems it likely that the erection of *kudurrus* is a tradition stemming from a temple context. Priests had access to ‘libraries’, in which they could copy passages from literary texts (‘Vorlagen und Versatzstücke’; Paulus 2014: 278). This hypothesis could be supported by first millennium literary colophons, which imply a use of writing boards in the temple context. Thus, religious narrative passages on *kuduru* artefacts, especially in grants to temple personnel and temples with a strong religious context, could have been copied from writing boards stored in temple libraries. The narrative introductions on some *kudurrus* have parallels in literature, i.e., in royal hymns (e.g. phrases such as ‘being looked upon favourably by the king’, Paulus 2014: 53–6). The *kuduru* MŠZ 2 (see above Section 4.1.1.2) notably includes a hymnic introduction and the curse formula contains verbatim parallels to *Ludlul bēl nemēqi*, supporting Paulus’ argument that writing boards were used as a *Vorlage* for literary parts of a *kuduru*.

Thus, I believe it is useful to compare the colophons of first millennium literary and scholarly texts and the colophons of Middle Babylonian *kuduru* inscriptions. In 4.2.1 I introduce the term *gabarû*, which appears together with the term *lē'u* in both Middle Babylonian *kuduru* inscriptions (see above Sections 4.1.1.1 and 4.1.1.2). In Section 4.2.2 I examine the colophons of first millennium literary and scholarly texts and in Section 4.2.3 I study the colophons of Middle and Neo Babylonian *kuduru* artefacts.

4.2.1 The Term *gabarû*

On the two *kudurrus* discussed above, KA IV and MŠZ, the writing board is referred to as a GABA.RI/*gabarē lē'i*. The term *gabarû*, ‘duplicate, copy, answer’ appears in colophons of literary texts and refers to an exemplar of a text that served as a *Vorlage* (Worthington 2012: 4). Akkadian *gabarû* is a loanword from Sumerian GABA.RI (see AHw: 271b, s.v. *gab(a)rû*; CAD G: 2a, s.v. *gabarû* (*gabrû*)). As I show below, in Section 4.2.2.2, the alleged *status constructus* of *gabarû* in the singular is apparently written *gaba/ga-ba-re-e* (or GABA.RI^c). These writings appear to indicate that the root vowel of *gab(a)rû* is *-ē*, based on the Sumerian **gaba-ri** (see the examples below in Section 4.2.2.2 and in the *kuduru* inscriptions in Section 4.2.3 below). Note, however, that not in all cases, in which *gaba/ga-ba-re-e* (or GABA.RI^c) is followed by terms for a writing material, it can indubitably be understood as a *status constructus* singular.

In the colophons of literary texts, the *Vorlage* is commonly called *labīru*, ‘old copy, original’ (CAD L: 32a-b), but it can also be called *gabarû*, ‘exemplar’, referring to the specific exemplar used as a *Vorlage* in this instance (CAD G: 2b–3a, s.v. *gabarû*; Hunger 1968: 6; Worthington 2012: 4).¹⁷ *gabarû* primarily means ‘copy’ (CAD G: 2a-b, 3a-b), implying that there is an identical text from which it had been copied. For this reason, the term *gabarû* or *gabrû* also means ‘equal, opponent’ and ‘ditto (i.e., exact copy)’ in omen series. An exemplar is a ‘copy of a book etc.; a transcript. Formerly also, the original of a book from which copies are made’ (Brown 1993/1: 878b).

‘The word exemplar will be used to mean: a manuscript which served as the textual basis for the production of another manuscript (not necessarily through one-to-one copying).’ ‘Assyriologists often use the word ‘*Vorlage*’ in this meaning; some Assyriologists, e. g. fn. 21 and passim in RIMA, use ‘exemplar’ in the sense which we attribute to ‘manuscript’ (Worthington 2012: 4).

If the term GABA.RI/*gabarû* appears in the colophons of *kudurru* monuments, it refers to several types of legal documents that served as a *Vorlage*. Brinkman (2006: 7) asserts that the term GABA.RI/*gabarû* in *kudurru* inscriptions marks the *kudurru* monument as the ‘copy’ of the original legal documents:

[M]any of the stone artifacts [= *kudurru* monuments] bear inscriptions that were copied more or less verbatim from legal documents written on clay. These texts bear headings or descriptions of themselves such as *tuppu/tuppi* “tablet/tablet of” or *kangu/kunukku* “sealed document” [...]. Some of these texts are marked clearly as copies (GABA.RI = *gabarû*) of sealed clay originals, but others bear no such explicit indication. Because of their wording, it seems likely that texts of the latter type simply took over the terminology of the clay documents without alteration; hence self-references in them to the artifact being a “tablet” or “sealed document” are presumably to the original clay tablet, not to its copy on stone. (Brinkman 2006: 7)

Brinkman and Dalley (1988: 92) point out that ‘[a]ny text on stone would necessarily be a copy of a sealed document’.

In the following excursus, I will discuss the use of the term *gabarû* in first millennium colophons of literary and scholarly texts and in colophons of Middle Babylonian *kudurrus*. In this context, I will argue that the term *gabarû* may, in fact, not refer to the inscription as the ‘copy’, but to the ‘exemplar’ which was used as a

¹⁷ This becomes especially apparent in colophons informing us about the *Vorlage* of a *Vorlage*. One example are the colophons CT 41: 31 rev. 19; 32 rev. 8 (Hunger 1968: 120, nos. 410, 411), which inform us that their *Vorlages* (*labīršu*) had been copied from other *Vorlages* (*ultu ... labīri*). This *Vorlage* of the *Vorlage* is then qualified as ‘an exemplar from TN, and checked’ (*gabarē* TN *šaqirma bari*; see below, section ‘4.2.2.1 The term *gabarû* followed by a toponym’).

‘*Vorlage*’. My argument is bipartite: In 4.2.2 I examine the translations of colophons containing the term GABA.RI/*gabarû* in first millennium literary and scholarly texts and in 4.2.3 I evaluate the colophons on Kassite, Isin II and Neo Babylonian *kudurrus* and *kudurru*-like artefacts as well as their possible translations.

4.2.2 The Term *gabarû* in First Millennium Colophons

4.2.2.1 The Term *gabarû* Followed by a Toponym

According to Hunger (1968: 6) GABA.RI/*gabarê* (in the *status constructus*)¹⁸ followed by a toponym, henceforth GABA.RI/*gabarê* TN (= toponym), refers to the physical copy used as a *Vorlage*, and not to the tablet upon which the text had been written, since the same text may also contain references to a different date and location, where it had been inscribed.

Dieser Ausdruck könnte auch die jeweils vorliegende Tafel meinen, was aber durch Kolophone, die neben “Exemplar von ON” auch noch ein Datum mit (anderer) Ortsangabe aufweisen, widerlegt wird. Sinngemäß ist also gabari ON mit “*Vorlage* aus ON” zu übersetzen. (Hunger 1968: 6)

Leichty (1964: 151) proposes a similar definition:

[T]he colophon will [often] designate the geographical source of the original from which the tablet is copied. Usually this is simply done with the phrase: *gabarê* GN (=geographical name) “copy from TN”. (Leichty 1964: 151)

Although Leichty explicates that GABA.RI/*gabarê* followed by a toponym refers to the geographical region of the *Vorlage*, from which the tablet was copied, he translates GABA.RI/*gabarê* TN as ‘copy from TN’. The term ‘copy’ is polysemic, since also a *Vorlage* could be a copy of another *Vorlage*. As opposed to his explanation, many Assyriologists, who translated GABA.RI/*gabarê* TN as ‘copy from TN’, appear to believe that *gabarû* refers to the text to which the colophon belonged as the ‘copy’, and not to the *Vorlage*.

However, Hunger’s definition of *gabarû* as the exemplar which functioned as a *Vorlage* (Hunger 1968: 6) is confirmed by colophons, in which the phrase GABA.RI/*gabarê* TN is syntactically integrated into a sentence in the colophon.¹⁹ Hunger’s interpretation of GABA.RI/*gabarê* TN, ‘exemplar from TN’ as the *Vorlage* for the

¹⁸ von Soden 1995: 96, 101–104.

¹⁹ Lambert (1957: 9) believed that GABA.RI/*gabarê* TN ‘is never related syntactically to other parts of the colophon’. As seen by the examples quoted in this article, Hunger (1968: 6, fn. 1) has argued against Lambert’s assertion by presenting several example sentences, in which the phrase GABA.RI/*gabarê* TN is syntactically integrated into a sentence in the colophon.

preserved tablet is proven by the colophon of MSL 4, 191 (Hunger 1968: 124, no. 424). In the colophon of MSL 4, 191 the phrase GABA.RI/*gabarē* TN is presumably used for the *Vorlage* of the *Vorlage*: [*ki-i* KA *ṭup-pi ša a*]-*na* KA GABA.RI TN *šaṭ-ru* [... DUMU¹] *Mi-šir-a-a* DU²⁰-*ma* ([*kī pī ṭuppi ša a*]*na pī gabarē* TN *šaṭru* [... *mār*] *Miširāja išṭurma*), ‘... the son of] Miširāja has written (it) verbatim from a tablet, which had been written verbatim from an exemplar from TN’ (MSL 4 191: ii a–d; Hunger 1968: 124, no. 424).

It is grammatically possible to translate other examples by Hunger in such a way that the phrase *gabarē* TN refers the tablet upon which it was written as ‘a copy from TN’. However, note that in case the find spot of the tablets is known, the geographical origin of the *Vorlage* called GABA.RI/*gabarū* differs from the findspot in the examples above (see Hunger 1968: table of contents, 6–7, 109, 117, 124).

Thus, the following two examples support Hunger’s (1968: 6) suggestion. The phrase *ki-i pi-i ṭup-pi* GABA.RI TN *šá-ṭir-ma ba-ri* (Akkadian transcription: *kī pī ṭuppi gabarē* TN *šaṭir bari*) means ‘inscribed verbatim from the tablet, an exemplar (=Vorlage) from TN, and checked’ (cf. BA 5, 583: rev. 12; Hunger 1968: 6, 109, no. 349). The tablet from which the text is copied verbatim (*kī pī ṭuppi*) is further qualified by the apposition (von Soden 1995: 233–234) GABA.RI TN, ‘an exemplar from TN’.²¹ A similar example is the colophon on STT 232: 40–41, which says *ki-i pi-i* IM.GID₂.DA GABA.RI TN *šá ... (kī pī giṭṭi gabarē* TN *ša ...)*, ‘verbatim from a long tablet, an exemplar (=Vorlage) from TN, which ...’ (STT, 232: 40; Hunger 1968: 6, 117, no. 381).

Other first millennium colophons support Hunger’s definition: Both the CAD G: 112a, s.v. *giṭṭu*, and Hunger (1968: 120, no. 410) understand GABA.RI in the colophon of CT 41: 31 rev. 19 as a reference to the *Vorlage*. The colophon says ‘LIBIR.RA¹-šu TA *muḫ-ḫi* IM.GID₂.DA SUMUN GABA.RI TN SAR-*ma* IGI.TAB²² (Akkadian transcription: *labīršu ultu muḫḫi giṭṭi labīri gabarē* TN *šaṭirma bari*), ‘its *Vorlage* had been written from an old long tablet, an exemplar from TN, and checked’. The explicit reference to the *Vorlage* at the beginning (*‘labīršu’*) makes it unlikely to translate *gabarē* TN *šaṭirma* as ‘(This ?) copy from TN was written’, but instead understand *gabarē* TN as a description of this *Vorlage*.

The translation of *gabarū* as ‘exemplar’ which serves as the *Vorlage*, is confirmed in the colophon of the tablet AO. 6459: 27a, which reads TA^{GES} DA

²⁰ see Borger 2010: 317.

²¹ It is grammatically possible to translate ‘*gabarē* TN *šaṭir* as ‘the (=this) copy from TN is inscribed’ and refer to the tablet upon which it was written with the term *gabarū*. Together with the preceding phrase *kī pī ṭuppi* the sentence reads: ‘verbatim from a tablet a/the (=this) copy from TN is inscribed’. In this case the toponym does not designate the *Vorlage* but the tablet on which the colophon is written.

²² see Borger 2010: 407.

SUMU-šu *gaba-re-e* UNUG^{KI} SAR-*ma* BA.IGI, ‘From a writing board, its *Vorlage*²³ an exemplar from Uruk, written and checked’ (the author’s translation). Both, Hunger (1968: 42) and Thureau-Dangin (1921: 99) understand *gabarû* as the ‘exemplar’ which functions as the *Vorlage*: ‘Écrit et revu d’après une ancienne tablette, exemplaire d’Uruk.’ (Thureau-Dangin 1921: 99) and ‘Von einer alten Wachstafel, einem Exemplar aus Uruk, (ab)geschrieben und kollationiert’ (Hunger 1968: 42).

Apart from these examples, Hunger (1968: 6) further substantiates his translation of GABA.RI/*gabarê* TN with a famous colophon from a tablet of hemerologies (VAT 9663, KAR 177; Hunger 1968: 6; Lambert 1957: 8; von Soden 1953: 22):

Die Exemplare aus Sippar, Nippur, Babel, Larsa, Ur, Uruk und Eridu haben die Gelehrten ausgezogen, daraus ausgewählt und (das) dann dem König des Alls Nazimaruttasch (1313–1288) übergeben (von Soden 1953: 22)

Von Soden (1953: 22) translates ‘they excerpted and selected the *gabarû*’, i.e., he interprets GABA.RI as a verbal object in the plural. He explicitly translates *gabarû* as ‘Exemplare’ and refers to the *Vorlages*, not to the text to which the colophon belongs. The *gabarû* exemplars had apparently been excerpted from copies in seven different towns for the Kassite king Nazi-maruttasch (1307–1282). I translate the passage the following way:

GABA.RI U₄.KIB.NUN^{KI} NIBRU^{KI} KÁ.DINGIR.RA^{KI} U₄.UNU^{KI} ŠEŠ.UNU^{KI} UNU^{KI} u Er(i)₄-du₁₀^{KI} *um-ma-a-ni ú-na-as-si-ḥu-ma ú-na-as-si-qu-ma* (Akkadian transcription: *gabarê Sippir Nip-puri Bābili Larsa Uri Uruk ū Eridu ummāni unassiḥūma unassiḡūma*), ‘exemplars from Sippar, Nippur, Babylon, Larsa, Ur, Uruk, and Eridu the scholars extracted (=excerpted) and selected’ (KAR 177 obv. 8, VAT 9663 obv. iv 25–30)

Although these examples lend weight to the translation of *gabarû* as ‘exemplar serving as *Vorlage*’, translators have deviated from this definition of the term. There are examples of colophons, in which researchers have translated *gabarû* both ways, either as ‘*Vorlage*’ or as ‘copy’:

A good example of the differing translations of *gabarû* is BM 92694 (TDP p. 52–56). BM 92694 is a Late Babylonian tablet containing parts of a diagnostic omen series from the 11th year of Artaxerxes (5th/4th century BC). BM 92694: 117–118 mentions GABA.RI *bār-sipa*^{KI} GEN₇ SUMUN-¹šú¹ ^{1d}AG-ku-šur-šú ... GUB-*ma* BIR² (Akkad. transcript.: *gabarê Barsipa kīma labīrišu Nabû-kušuršu ... išturma bari²*),

23 Both, Hunger (1968: 42) and Thureau-Dangin (1921: 99) translate *labīrišu* as an adjective qualifying the noun *lē’u*, the writing board. Both of them translate ‘From an old writing board, an exemplar from Uruk, written and checked’. However, in my opinion it is more likely that *labīrišu* as the apposition ‘its *Vorlage*’. The possessive suffix 3rd ps. sg. refers to the tablet upon which the colophon was written and explains that the writing board was ‘its *Vorlage*’.

‘an exemplar from Borsippa; according to its *Vorlage* Nabû-kušuršu has written and collated it’. While Hunger (1968: 51) and Labat (1951: 213) translate *gabarē Barsippa* as ‘*Vorlage* from Borsippa’, Koch (2015: 56) translates *gabarē Barsippa kīma labīrīšu* as ‘copy of an original from the city of Barsippa’.²⁴ Thus, Koch (2015: 56) appears to imply that *gabarē Barsippa* refers to the tablet upon which the text was written,²⁵ whereas Hunger and Labat translate *gabarū* as referring to the exemplar serving as *Vorlage*.

However, Koch’s interpretation of *gabarū* as ‘copy’ may be supported by a third way to translate the colophon of BM 92694: since Hunger and von Soden have shown that GABA.RI/*gabarē* TN can be integrated into a sentence, there is a third option: *gabarē Barsippa* may be the accusative object of *ištur*, ‘he wrote’ (*šaṭāru* ‘to write, inscribe’, can be used with an accusative object), i.e. ‘Nabû-kušuršu [...] has written a copy from Borsippa according to its *Vorlage*, and collated it.’

When examining the colophon of BM 92694, we have to keep in mind Hunger’s (1968: 6) explanation that GABA.RI/*gabarē* TN has to refer to the *Vorlage* from a certain geographical region, because the text belonging to the colophon may contain references to a different date and location where it had been inscribed. The provenance of the tablet BM 92694 is unclear; it is most likely Sippar.²⁶ However, it is possible that the tablet originating in Borsippa was sent to Sippar, as it was common practice to borrow, sell, and collect manuscripts of scholarly and literary texts from other towns.

Manuscripts travelled either as loans, gifts, loot or simply with their owners. They were certainly considered collectible items. One example of the moveability of tablets is a small tablet on extispicy from the library of Aššurbanipal in Nineveh, which 300 years later ended up in the private collection of a Late Babylonian scholar in Uruk. (Koch 2015: 58)

²⁴ Both Hunger (1968: 51) and Labat (1951: 213) separate *gabarē Barsippa* from the following sentence *kīma labīrīšu Nabû-kušuršu ... išturma bari²*, ‘according to its original Nabû-kušuršu [...] has written (it), and collated it.’ Koch (2015: 56), however, separates *gabarē Barsippa kīma labīrīšu* from ‘Nabû-kušuršu [...] has written (it), and collated it.’

²⁵ Similarly, the colophon of the unprovenanced tablet BM 42286 (CT 41: 39, part of the omen series Enūma Anu Enlil): rev. 12 (Hunger 1968: 120, no. 409) could be understood to be referring to the tablet upon which it was inscribed, i.e., ‘(This is) a copy from Borsippa’. Instead of this, *gabarē Barsippa kīma labīrīšu šaṭirma bari* has to be translated ‘(The *Vorlage* is) an exemplar from Borsippa. (This tablet) is written and collated according to its *Vorlage*.’ (CT 41: 39 rev. 12; Hunger 1968: 120, no. 409).

²⁶ ‘BM 92694’. Research Collection Online. June 2019. The British Museum. https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=799039&partId=1&searchText=92694&page=1 (accessed July 3, 2019). BM 92694 belongs to the Rassam collection AH 83–1–18 which contains tablets from Sippar, Babylon, Borsippa and Nineveh, with the majority from Sippar (Finkelstein, Leichty, and Walker 1988: xii 49; Reade 1986: xxxiv).

Frame and George (2005: 277) mention an ‘enormous influx of Babylonian tablets and writing-boards’ to Niniveh.²⁷ Koch (2015: 28) assumes that tablets could be bought, because it is widely attested that scholars copied compendia, e.g., divinatory series, from originals which they had borrowed from other scholars and temple libraries. An example for this practice is the scholar Nabû-zuqup-kēnu from Kalḫu, who copied tablets from Assyrian and Babylonian colleagues (Koch 2015: 57).

To sum up Hunger’s (1968: 6) argument: Firstly, colophons, in which the phrase GABA.RI/*gabarē* TN is syntactically integrated into a complete sentence in the colophon, imply that the term *gabarû* referred to the tablets or writing boards used as a *Vorlage* (see the examples above). Secondly, a colophon from a tablet of hemerologies (VAT 9663, KAR 177) shows that several exemplars, called *gabarû*, were extracted (=excerpted), which similarly suggests that these *gabarû* exemplars served as *Vorlage*. Thirdly, occasionally the geographic region mentioned in the phrase GABA.RI/*gabarē* TN differs in some colophons of literary and scholarly texts from the region, in which the text was found or inscribed. This means that the geographic region mentioned in the phrase GABA.RI/*gabarē* TN refers to the geographic region, from which the *Vorlage* originated.

Hunger’s original argument looks particularly convincing when the term *gabarû* is syntactically integrated into a sentence, since such colophons provide us with more information, such as the origin of the *Vorlage*. The same interpretation can also be suggested for the instances where no context is available. Although Leichty (1964: 147) has pointed out that late colophons contain relatively few formulas, single phrases of a colophon exhibit certain formulaic regularities (Hunger 1968: 1; Koch 2015: 56; Leichty 1964: 147), especially pre-Late Babylonian colophons (Leichty 1964: 147). The formulas GABA.RI/*gabarē* TN and *kīma labīrišu ... išṭur* are ubiquitous in the highly standardised Neo-Assyrian colophons (Leichty 1964: 147).

4.2.2.2 The Term *gabarû* Followed by a Writing Material

Both *kudurrus* discussed in this article contain the phrase GABA.RI/*gabarē lē’i*, a ‘*gabarû* of a writing board’. This phrase is ubiquitously attested in colophons of literary and scholarly texts from the first millennium. The sumerogram GABA.RI, or the Akkadian *status constructus gabarē/ê* in the singular or plural,²⁸ may be followed by different plural nouns denoting writing materials, henceforth abbreviated as ‘WM’ (=writing material).

²⁷ Two Late Babylonian copies of Neo-Assyrian letters illustrate how Assurbanipal ordered tablets from the scholars of Babylon and Borsippa for his libraries. Neo-Assyrian kings had new editions copied and sent to them (Koch 2015: 57; Frame and George 2005: 265–284).

²⁸ see Huehnergard 2005: 57.

Grammatically there is no difference between the genitive constructions consisting of *gabarû* followed by a toponym or *gabarû* followed by a writing material. Translating GABA.RI/*gabarê/ê* WM differently from GABA.RI/*gabarê/ê* TN implies that the head noun (*regens*) GABA.RI/*gabarû* acquires a different meaning depending on the dependent noun (*rectum*) following. This is certainly possible, but neither Hunger nor Leichty do explicitly deviate from their statement that the sumerogram GABA.RI refers to the writing materials used as a *Vorlage* – even when it is followed by a number of nouns in the plural denoting writing materials, from which the text was copied. The *Vorlages* mentioned in the colophons could be clay tablets, writing boards, leather scrolls, stela, and baked bricks (Hunger 1968: 6–8; Leichty 1964: 151). However, Hunger (1968: 6) translates the phrase GABA.RI^{IM}DUB u^{GES}DA' (Hunger 1968: 6, 55, no. 142; LBAT 1394 rev. vi 6–7)²⁹ as a genitive construction 'Kopie von Ton und Wachstafeln' (Akkadian transcription: *gabarê tup-pāni ū lē'āni*). This could be perceived to mean that GABA.RI/*gabarê* refers to the tablet upon which the copied text was written, while the *Vorlage* was the *tuppāni*, 'the tablets' and the *lē'āni*, 'the writing boards' from which the *gabarû* had been copied. To avoid misunderstandings, Hunger could have translated *tuppāni ū lē'ī* as an apposition to *gabarû* in the plural, i.e. 'the exemplars (=Vorlage), clay tablets and writing boards', or as a nominal clause, 'the exemplars (=Vorlage) are clay tablets and writing boards'. Furthermore, Hunger (1968: 542–7) translates similar sentences mentioning different kinds of writing materials as 'a copy of WM'.³⁰

However, Hunger explicates that the text containing the colophon was copied from a compilation of *Vorlages* (see Hunger 1968: 6–7). Does his explanation mean that his translation of GABA.RI/*gabarê* WM(s) as 'Kopie von Ton und Wachstafeln' does not imply that GABA.RI/*gabarê* refers to the tablet upon which the copied text was written? One thing which should be kept in mind is that the term 'copy' is equivocal, since a *Vorlage* could be a copy, as well. Colophons not only list several locations from which the *Vorlages* originate (see the previous Section 4.2.2.1), but also several writing materials. According to Hunger this illustrates the practice of assembling several sources to produce a *Vorlage*, for example, whenever a tablet was damaged and had to be emended according to another tablet.

²⁹ 'BM 35328'. Research Collection Online. June 2019. The British Museum. https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/W_Sp-II-901 (accessed July 3, 2019).

³⁰ This choice is reaffirmed by Hunger and Pingree (1999: 176) who translate a colophon in a Late Babylonian astronomical text mentioning GABA.RI^{IM}DUB u^{GES}DA (Akkadian transcription: *gabarê tuppi/āni ū lē'ī/āni*) as 'Written (as) a copy of clay tablets and wooden tablets [of] Diaries belonging to ...' (Hunger 1968: 6, 55, no. 142; LBAT 1394 rev. vi 6–7). This translation of *gabarû* is similar to the above-mentioned by Koch (2015: 56) in that it implies that *gabarû* refers to the tablet upon which the text is written and not to the *Vorlage*.

Sie sind also offensichtlich kompiliert worden, wahrscheinlich, indem Stelen, die auf einer Tafel abgebrochen waren oder aus einem anderen Grund fehlten, nach einer anderen Tafel ergänzt wurden. [...] Dafür könnte der Kolophon von KAR 177 (Nr. 292) sprechen, in dem davon die Rede ist, daß Gelehrte *Vorlagen* aus 7 Städten exzerpiert, ausgewählt und dem König Nazimaruttaš übergeben hätten. (Hunger 1968: 6)

It is equally possible to translate GABA.RI IM DUB u GES DA as ‘the *Vorlagen* are tablets and writing boards’, since the sumerogram GABA.RI can designate the singular and plural of *gabarû*. Furthermore, case endings in these first millennium colophons do not consistently agree with earlier grammatical patterns anymore (Riemschneider 1973: 146, 181; von Soden 1995: 299, 301–302).

The polysemy of both Akkadian *gabarû* and English ‘copy’ may render efforts for a consistent translation of *gabarû* in colophons futile. However, keeping Hunger’s original definition of *gabari* TN as ‘*Vorlage* aus ON [= German ‘Ortsname’, i.e. toponym]’ in mind, GABA.RI WMs can also be translated as ‘exemplar(s) of (a) WM(s)’, i.e. ‘the *Vorlage*(s) is/are: exemplar(s) of (a) WM(s)’.

One example for several possible translation is the colophon of the Neo-Assyrian tablet CT 28: 50: rev. 25.³¹ The CAD G: 3a, s.v. *gabarû*, translates *gaba-re-e* 2 GES LE.U₅.UM.MEŠ SAR-*ma* È as ‘copy of two tablets, written and checked’. The form *gaba-re-e* in CT 28: 50: rev. 25 either expresses the *status constructus* in the singular (i.e. *gabarê*), as the CAD G: 3a presupposes, or the gen./acc. plural communis (i.e. *gabarê*). The phrase SAR-*ma* È (Akkadian transcription: *šaṭirma bari*), ‘(this) is written, and (it) is collated’, appears in many colophons, and refers to the tablet upon which the colophon is written (see CAD Š/2: 228a–229a, s.v. *šaṭāru* 1b). As quoted above, the *Vorlage* is often introduced with the phrase *kīma labirīšu* or *kī pī X* (CAD Š/2: 228a–b, s.v. *šaṭāru* 1b). In CT 28: 50: rev. 25 *gabarê*, the ‘exemplars’, are not introduced with *kīma*. However, *gabarê* (the accusative/genitive plural communis) may be interpreted as an accusative instrumentalis (see Paulus 2014: 334; ‘with(the help of) X’ corresponds to Huehnergard’s (2011: 173) ‘accusative of respect, manner, or means’, von Soden (1995: 248) ‘adverbiale [r] Akk. des Zustandes’, and, presumably, Streck’s (2011: 36) ‘Zustandsakkusativ (?)’). Then, *gabarê* expresses ‘from/with the help of exemplars’. In this case CT 28: 50: rev. 25 can be translated with ‘(This is) written (sg.) from/with the help of exemplars (,/of) 2 writing boards, and checked’.³² If we follow Hunger’s argument (see Hunger 1968: 6), then this genitive construction refers to a *Vorlage* in the

31 ‘CT 28: pl. 50’ (K 2714 + K 3831 + K 4062). Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative. <https://cdli.ucla.edu/P365935> (accessed July 3 2019).

32 If *gaba-re-e* (*gabarê*), the ‘exemplars’, expresses the gen./acc. plural communis, then *gabarê* 2 *lêi* cannot be translated as the nominal clause ‘(The *Vorlagen* are) exemplars(, /of) 2 writing boards’, since ‘exemplars(, /of)’ in plural should stand in the nominative (‘The exemplars are ...’) or the *status constructus* of the nominative plural *gabarû* ‘(The *Vorlagen* are) exemplars of ...’.

status constructus singular (*gabarē*), which was a compilation of several WMs. In this case, it can also be transcribed as *gabarē 2 lē'ī šaṭirma bari* and translated as '(the Vorlage is) a copy of two writing boards, written and checked'.

Hunger (1968: 6, 143, nos. 541–544) translated several more colophons with the formula GABA.RI WM(s) as 'Kopie von WMs', either implicating a *Vorlage* consisting of several writing materials, or assuming that GABA.RI, indeed, refers to the tablet upon which the copied text was written. He translated two colophons from omen series, which say GABA.RI 2 ^{GEŠ}LE. 'U₅. 'UM(.MEŠ) ...] as 'the copy of two wooden writing board[s]' (CT 20: 8b rev. 7; see Rm. 83–1–18, 429 rev. 11). Hunger also translated GABAR.RI '2' ^{GEŠ}LE. 'U₅. 'UM *aš-šur-ū* [...] as 'a copy of 2 Assyrian wooden writing boards' (K. 127: rev. 22).

He presumably considered the Sumerogram GABA.RI to express the *status constructus* in the singular (Akkadian transliterations: *gabarē 2 lē'āni* ...] and *gabarē 2 lē'āni aššuru/ū*). However, I would like to suggest the following alternative translation for both colophons: '(The *Vorlage*(s) are) exemplars of 2 (Assyrian) writing boards' (Akkadian transcription: *gabarū 2 lē'āni* ...] and *gabarū 2 lē'āni aššuru/ū*).

As demonstrated, Hunger does not translate the formula GABA.RI WM uniformly. Although he had implicitly or possibly deviated from his original definition of the term *gabarū* by translating GABA.RI WM as 'copy of WM(s)', in some cases he also translates GABA.RI WM as 'the *Vorlage* is/are WM(s)'. One example is the colophon of LKA 116: rev. 26 (see Hunger 1968: 7, 87, no. 276), which says GABA.RI ^{GEŠ}LE.U₅.UM URI^{KI} ša É.GAL-*li*. Hunger translates this as '*Vorlage* (is) an Akkadian writing board from the palace' (cf. Hunger 1968: 7, 87, no. 276), apparently assuming a nominal clause (presumed Akkadian transcription: *gabarū lē'u* [Ak]kade ša ekalli).

Another instance is the colophon of the Seleucid tablet BRM 4, 8 from Uruk. Hunger (1968: 37–38) translates GEN₇ SUMUN-šú SAR-*ma ba-rù u up-puš₄ gaba-re-e* ^{GEŠ}DA SUMUN-šú NIG₂.GA ^d60 *u An-tu₄* (BRM 4: 8 35 as well as three other parallel Seleucid colophons) as 'Gemäß seinem Original geschrieben, kollationiert und "gemacht". *Vorlage* eine alte Wachstafel, Besitz von Anu und Antu'. As opposed to Hunger, the CAD G: 3a translates: 'copy of a wooden tablet, its original (being) the property (of the exchequer) of Anu and Antu' (The CAD G: 3a translates *labīru* as 'original' and not as an adjective). The CAD G: 3a appears to understand *gaba-re-e* or GABA.RI^e as a *status constructus gabarē*.

A third instance is the Seleucid colophon K. 3753 (Weidner 1967: pl. 12): iv, l. 7: [GEN₇ SUMUN-šú SAR-*ma È*] *u up-puš₄ gaba-re-e* ^{GEŠ}DA SUMUN-šú NIG₂.GA ^d60 *u An-tu₄*, which Hunger (1968: 38) translates as '[Gemäß seinem Original

geschrieben, kollationiert] und “gemacht”. *Vorlage* eine alte Wachstafel aus dem Besitz von Anu und Antu’.

In all three cases, Hunger (1968: 37–38) understands *gabarû* as ‘*Vorlage*’ and *gaba-re-e*^{GEŠ}DA SUMUN-šû NIG₂.GA d60 u An-tu₄ as “the *Vorlage* (was) an old writing board, property of Anu and Antu” as a nominal clause (it is unclear why *gabarê* is not in the nominative, but the expected case endings are not respected anyway, as is also visible in the deity’s name ‘Antu’). Another possibility is to integrate *gabarê lê’i labīrīšu makkūr Ani Antu* as an apposition in the genitive to *kīma labīrīšu* into the sentence and translate *gabarê lê’i* as a genitive construction: ‘written, checked and conducted according to its original, a copy/an exemplar of a writing board, its original the property of Anu and Antu’ (or: ‘an exemplar of an old writing board, the property of Anu and Antu’).

In view of the distinct translations by researchers presented here one may question whether it is productive for the understanding of the meaning of colophons (both of literary/scholarly texts and of *kudurru* inscriptions) to strive for a consistent translation of the term GABA.RI/*gabarû*. Such an objection is certainly justified, since the polysemy of the term *gabarû*, which, among others, includes the meaning ‘copy’ and the meaning ‘exemplar’, means that both could serve as a *Vorlage*. This means that GABA.RI/*gabarê/ê* WM(s)/TN(s) could either refer to the tablet upon which the copied text was written or it qualifies the *Vorlage* geographically (TN) or according to its material (WM). The differing syntactic structures, which the translators apply, lead to a different meaning. In order to gather a better understanding of the role which a writing material such as a writing board played in the production of a *kudurru* monument, it may be fruitful to find a consistent translation in the specific context of colophons, even though polysemy legitimates both translations.

However, the translator has to carefully analyse the syntax of the colophon in order to decide, to which textual artefact the term GABA.RI/*gabarû* refers. Hunger’s reasoning that GABA.RI/*gabarê/ê* TN refers to the physical copy used as a *Vorlage* continues to be cogent. However, the formula GABA.RI/*gabarê/ê* WM(s) could be translated in both ways discussed. Depending on the syntax of the colophon, a ‘copy/compilation of several WMs’ can designate the tablet upon which the colophon is inscribed or the *Vorlage* from which it is copied. Consistency is key to provide an accurate and clear translation. Thus, for the sake of consistency, I prefer to translate the formula GABA.RI^(-e)/*gabarê/ê* WM(s) *šaṭirma bari* etc.) as ‘(The *Vorlage* is) a copy/an exemplar of WM(s, written and checked etc.)’.

4.2.3 The Term *gabarû* in *kudurru* Inscriptions

Colophons start to appear on *kudurrus* and *kudurru*-like textual artefacts³³ already in the Kassite period.³⁴ The phrase ‘GABA.RI/*gabarê/ê* WM(s)’ also appears in the colophons of these textual artefacts. Out of 19 colophons on *kudurrus* and *kudurru*-like textual artefacts 10 colophons contain the formula (*gabarê*) *kanik šarri ša šiprêti* the ‘(copy/exemplar of the) sealed document of the king of the instructions’. These 10 colophons date to the period from Isin II king Marduk-nādin-aḥḥê to the Neo Babylonian period (Charpin 2002: 176; Oelsner 2002: 527–528; Paulus 2014: 59, 104): MNA 4: ii 21–22; MNA 6: ii 19; MNA 7: rev. 19–20; MŠZ 1: i 27–28; AAI 1: rev. 8; AAI 4: rev. 19; NMA 2: 4’; NAI 1: rev. 27; NAI 3: rev. vi 30–31; Ashm. 1933.1101:³⁵ rev. iii 22’;

33 *kudurru*-like textual artefact are tablet-shaped stone artefacts with an inscription that is identical to a legal document; only occasionally a colophon indicates that it is a copy of a clay tablet (Paulus 2014: 10, 76).

34 The *kudurrus* and *kudurru*-like textual artefacts with colophons are: NM 1 (L 7072): iii 5’-7’; NM 2 (MDP 2: 86): vii 1–6 (colophon translated below in Section 4.2.3.1); KuE 1 (L 7076): iii 42; MŠ 4 (BM 90827): vi 26–32 (colophon translated below in Section 4.2.3.2); MŠ 5 (AS 6373): ii 35; NKU I 3 (BM 92987): rev. 17; MNA 4: ii 21–22 (IM 90585); MNA 6: ii 19 (so-called ‘Warwick *kudurru*’); MNA 7: rev. 19–20 (BM 90938); MŠZ 1: i 27–28 (IM 74651); MŠZ 2 v 15–16 (IM 80908); AAI 1: rev. 8 (VA 5937); AAI 4: rev. 19 (private collection); NMA 2: 4’ (CBS 13873); NAI 1: rev. 27 (BM 90922); NAI 3: rev. vi 30–31 (BM 91000); Ashm. 1933.1101: rev. iii 22’. Both MAI II 1: v 48–50 (VA 2663) and ŠŠU 1: ii 28 (VA 3614) contain a statement of royal sealing.

Please note that KuE 1 (L 7076) may be an Isin II copy of a Kassite *kudurru*, which may be an explanation for the colophon, which is typical for later, Isin II, *kudurru* forms (see Paulus 2014: 341 for the discussion and further literature). The inscription on *kudurru* NM 2 (MDP 2: 86) is a Kassite period copy of a destroyed *kudurru* of a previous king.

Slanski (2003: 101) calls colophons after the ‘curses and/or blessings’ a ‘colophon’, but calls the colophons before the protective part (curse formula), which refer to the *kanik šarri ša šiprêti*, a ‘statement of royal sealing’. Paulus (2012: 357–67) has argued that the *kanik šarri ša šiprêti* is, in fact, a special type of legal document (see above, step 2 of the legal process of a land grant in Section 2) and not the seal of the king. However, two *kudurrus* with the extended form (type ii), MAI II 1: v 48–50 (VA 2663) and ŠŠU 1: ii 28 (VA 3614), contain a statement at the end of the inscription, after the protective part (curse formula), which mention the sealing of a legal document with the royal seal. In her overview of form elements Paulus (2014: 72–75) does not consider the colophons which appear before the protective part (curse formulas) in MNA 4: ii 21–22; MŠZ 1: i 27–28, and NAI 3: rev. vi 30–31 to be colophons. Since it is unclear whether MNA 6: ii 19 contained a protective part (curse formula), she does not consider the colophon in her overview, as well. NMA 2: 4’ is not considered to be a colophon in the overview of form elements.

35 The *kudurru* Ashm. 1933.1101 is from the 7th century BC (from Aššur-nādin-šumi, the son of Sennacherib, regarding the dating of this *kudurru* Brinkman, Dalley 1988: 76–98; Brinkman 2015: 126–127; Paulus 2014: 689–692; Weszeli 2015: 338). The colophon of Ashm. 1933.1101 says [...] ‘šá’ šip-re-e-’ti’, ‘[...] of the šiprêtu document’. Dalley and Brinkman consider the emendation [^{NA4}’KIŠIB LUGAL] or [GABA.RI ^{NA4}KIŠIB LUGAL] ‘šá’ šip-re-e-’ti’, ‘(Copy of) the sealed document of the king about the šiprêtu’ (Brinkman, Dalley 1988: 92).

Brinkman and Dalley 1988: 76–98; Paulus 2014: 555, 565, 568, 576, 595, 603, 637, 645, 656, 691).³⁶

They are of special interest for two reasons:

- (a) the *kudurru* MŠZ 2: v 15–16 mentions not only the writing board as *Vorlage*, but also the so-called *kanik šarri ša šiprēti*, and
- (b) they have the form ‘(GABA.RI/*gabarē/ê*) WM(s)’.

The *kudurru* inscription on four of these 10 *kudurnus* and *kudurru*-like textual artefacts is the ‘extended form’, which is attested from Meli-Šipak up to the early Neo-Babylonian period. It can contain a narrative introduction, followed by a legal part (land grant, parties, witnesses, date, sealing) and ends with a protective part consisting of curse formulas (Paulus 2014: 76–77, fn. 232; Slanski 2003: 101).³⁷ The colophons on four of these 10 *kudurru* monuments contain the term GABA.RI (MNA 4: ii 21–22; MNA 7: rev. 19–20; MŠZ 1: i 27–28; NAI 3: rev. vi 30–31). GABA.RI is attested on the colophon of a fifth *kudurru*, AAI 4, which has the *kudurru* form iv, which only consist of a legal part. The formula GABA.RI^{NA4}KIŠIB LUGAL.E ša šip-re-e-ti could be translated as ‘this (=the *kudurru*) is a copy of the sealed document of the king of the instructions’ or (based on Hunger) as ‘(The *Vorlage*) is an exemplar of the sealed document of the king of the instructions’. In all five inscriptions the colophon appears right after legal part, directly after the list of witnesses, location and date.³⁸

The other five colophons (MNA 6: ii 19; NAI 1: rev. 27; AAI 1: rev. 8; NMA 2: 4’; Ashm. 1933.1101: rev. iii 22’; Paulus 2014: 565, 595, 637, 645, 691) merely state *kanik šarri ša šiprēti*, ‘the sealed document of the king of the instructions’, without the preceding term *gabarû*/GABA.RI. The colophons appear directly after the legal part of the inscription; all of them do not contain a protective part (curse formula).³⁹ It was apparently sufficient to end the legal part with a reference to the legal document from which it was copied.

³⁶ ‘Dans un certain nombre de cas, on trouve, généralement dans le protocole final du texte, l’indication qu’on a affaire à la copie d’un document scellé’ (Charpin 2002: 176).

³⁷ Protective curses appear since Kadašman-Enlil I (1374–1360; Paulus 2014: 73). If the *kudurru* Ku 1 (BM 102588) dates to king Kurigalzu I (Paulus 2014: 305), then protective curses are attested earlier, under Kurigalzu I (before 1375). Since the Isin II period protective curses can appear within the legal part of the *kudurru* form (type iii and iv in Paulus 2014: 76–77).

³⁸ Only two of these five *kudurnus*, MNA 7 (BM 90938; Paulus 2014: 267–269) and AAI 4 (private collection; Paulus 2014: 602–605), contain no protective part (curse formula) after the colophon.

³⁹ The inscriptions on the *kudurru*-like textual artefacts AAI 1 and NMA 2 cannot be attribute to one of the four types of *kudurru* forms. The monuments NAI 1: rev. 27, MNA 6 and Ashm. 1933.1101 are *kudurnus*. The inscriptions on NAI 1 and Ashm. 1933.1101 are both type iv of the *kudurru* forms, which only consists of a legal part without a narrative introduction and an additional protective part (Paulus 2014: 77). It is unclear whether MNA 6: ii 19 contained a protective part (curse formula), since it is damaged (see Lambert 1981: 177 as opposed to Paulus 2014: 564).

As opposed to this, the colophon on the *kudurru* MŠZ 2, which both mentions a *kanik šarri ša šiprēti* and a writing board as *Vorlage*, is positioned after the complete inscription, i.e., after the protective part (curse formula), and not after the legal part.⁴⁰ The *kudurru*-text of MŠZ 2 notably contains passages praising the king and verbatim passages from the literary epic *Ludlul bēl nēmeqi* (Paulus 2014: 581–7). Based on the position of the colophon after the complete text, it is possible that the passages praising the king and the curse formula were copied from the writing board, while the legal part stems from the *kanik šarri ša šiprēti*.

This expendability of the term GABA.RI in colophons of Isin II and Neo-Babylonian *kudurrus* could mean that it was unnecessary to designate the legal part of the inscription as a ‘copy’, i.e. ‘This (=the preceding text) is a copy of the sealed document of the king of the instructions’. After all, it was obvious that the preceding legal provisions had been copied from the ‘sealed document of the king of the instructions’.⁴¹ It could also be interpreted as a sign that the term GABA.RI/*gabarû* refers to the WM(s) which it preceded. Such a view would support the proposition that *gabarē kanik šarri ša šiprēti* is to be translated as ‘(the *Vorlage*) is an exemplar of a sealed document of the king of the instructions’.

Apart from writing boards and the *kanik šarri ša šiprēti* the 19 colophons on *kudurrus* and *kudurru*-like textual artefacts mention other *Vorlages*: one colophon mentions explicitly a passage from a clay tablet and two other colophons mention a sealed legal agreement as *Vorlage*, which apparently contained final legal clauses against vindication.⁴² Since the colophons of Middle and Neo Babylonian *kudurru* inscriptions mostly refer to writing materials as *Vorlages*, the following sections will look at two ambiguous examples, the Kassite *kudurrus* MDP 2 pl. 19 vii 1–6 (a later copy of a *kudurru* by king Nazi-Maruttaš) and BBSt. No. 3 vi 26–32 (of king Meli-Šipak), in more detail.

4.2.3.1 MDP 2 pl. 19 vii 1–6

The inscription on the late Kassite *kudurru* NM 2 (Sb 21; MDP 2: pl. 19, Paulus 2014: 326) originates from the reign of Nazi-Maruttaš. However, the original *kudurru* was

⁴⁰ The two *kudurru* inscriptions of king Marduk-šāpik-zēri which contain a colophon, MŠZ 1 and 2, are a collation of textual elements (Paulus 2014: 104, fn. 281). However, the colophon of the *kudurru* MŠZ 1, which only mentions a *kanik šarri ša šiprēti* as *Vorlage*, follows the legal part and precedes the protective part (curse formula), as opposed to MŠZ 2, in which, according to the colophon, the complete inscription had two *Vorlages*, a writing board and the *kanik šarri ša šiprēti*.

⁴¹ For similar observations see Brinkman 2006: 7, fn. 22 and 23 and Brinkman and Dalley 1988: 92.
⁴² KuE 1 (L 7076): iii 42: ^{NA4}KIŠIB *la pa-qa-ri Ku-dūr-ri-^dEn-lil* [...], ‘a sealed tablet of not-claiming (a property) which Kudur-Enlil [...]’; similarly: MŠ 5 (AS 6373): ii 35: barely preserved: *la* [...], ‘not [...]’; NKU I 3 (BM 92987): rev. 17: *a-na pi-i ni-is-ḫi šá ṭi-i-ṭi*, ‘verbatim from a section of (a) clay (tablet)’.

destroyed and copied to the extant *kudurru* under the Kassite king Marduk-apla-iddina I (1171–1159; Paulus 2014: 341). A man called Šuḫuli-Šugab (perhaps a descendant of the grantee) replaced the original *kudurru* with a new one (NM 2: v-vii 1–6). In the colophon of NM 2 the term *gabarû* in the expression *gabarê/-ê labīrīšu* may either refer to the *kudurru* inscription as a ‘copy of its *Vorlage*’ or as ‘exemplars (pl.) of (= functioning as) its *Vorlages* (pl.)’. The sentence is reminiscent of colophons of scholarly texts with the expression *gabarê TN kīma labīrīšu šaṭīr*, ‘exemplar (= *Vorlage*) from TN. According to its *Vorlage* (= i.e. ‘it serving as the *Vorlage*’) copied’ (see Hunger 1968: 59–61, nos. 154–59):

Šu-ḫu-li-Šu-gab DUMU¹Ni-bi-Ši-pak na-ra-a ša NA₄ eš-ša gab-ba-re-e la-bi-<ri>-šu iš-tūr-ma ú-kin (NM 2 = MDP 2: pl. 19 vii 1–6)

In this case, the term *gabarê labīrīšu* provides numerous difficulties (Charpin 2002: 176, fn. 43). Paulus (2014: 330, 334) interprets *labīru* as an adjective (see CAD L: 26b-32a) which qualifies the term *gabarû*, and reads the form *gabarê labīra* in order to translate an *accusative instrumentalis*. This reading of the last sign as *-ra* enables her to translate ‘Šuḫuli-Šugab, Sohn des Nibi-Šipak, hat einen neuen *narû* aus Stein (mit Hilfe) einer alten Kopie geschrieben und dauerhaft aufgestellt.’ In Paulus’ translation the term *gabarû* refers to the *Vorlage* of the *narû*, although she opts for the translation ‘copy’. However, the photograph in MDP 2: pl. 19 shows that the last sign is a ŠU in contrast with the sign RA in the preceding line, vii 3. Thus, I deduce that we have to emend *la-bi-šu* to *la-bi-<ri>-šu*, as already proposed in AHw: 271, s.v. *gab(a)rû* 1a. Since the possessive suffix *-šu* is added, I suggest to identify *labīrīšu* as a noun, ‘its original(s)/*Vorlage*(n)’, and not as an adjective *labīru*, ‘old’, as Paulus does.

The CAD N/1: 366a, s.v. *narû*, interprets *gab-ba-re-e* as an accusative singular, as well, and translates it as an apposition to *narû*: ‘a new boundary marker of stone, a copy of the original one’. This implies that *gabarû* stands in the *status constructus* ending in a long *-ê⁴³* (loan word from Sumerian **gaba-ri**), i.e., *gabarê*, and that *labīrīšu* stands in the genitive and means ‘its original(s)/*Vorlage*(s)’. Thus, the translation of *gabarê labīrīšu* as ‘a copy of its *Vorlages*’ is certainly justifiable.

gab-ba-re-e may not be the *status constructus* singular, but the accusative/genitive plural communis *gabarê* (that possibly includes the accusative instrumentalis, see Paulus 2014: 334), which could express ‘from/with the help of exemplars of its *Vorlages*’. *labīrīšu* can also be understood as an apposition to *gabarê*

⁴³ However, according to the AHw: 272a, s.v. *gab(a)rû*, and in CAD G: 3b, s.v. *gabarû*, the term *gabarû* with the meaning ‘opponent’ seems to have the root ending *-a*, as it appears to be attested as a possible status pronominals in MB, NA and LB sources (see the writings *gab-ra-a-a*, *gab-ra-a-šu* and *gab-ra-šu*).

(*gabarê labirīšu*), and be translated as ‘from/with the help of the exemplars (pl.), its *Vorlages* (pl.)’ (which may sound like a hendiadys, though). This leaves us with several options for the colophon of the *kuduru* MDP 2: pl. 19 vii 1–6:

Šuḫuli-Šugab mār Nibi-Šipak narâ ša abni ešša gabarê/-ê labirīšu išturma ukīn,

- (a) ‘Šuḫuli-Šugab, the son of Nibi-Šipak, inscribed a new *narû*⁴⁴ out of stone, a copy of its *Vorlages*, and he permanently erected it.’
- (b) ‘Šuḫuli-Šugab, the son of Nibi-Šipak, inscribed a new *narû* out of stone from/with the help of the exemplars (pl.) of (or functioning as) its *Vorlages* (pl.), and he permanently erected it.’ (NM 2 = MDP 2: pl. 19 vii 1–6)

4.2.3.2 BBSt. No. 3 vi 26–32

The colophon on the Kassite *kuduru* of king Meli-Šipak (1186–1172), MŠ 4 (BBSt. No. 3): vi 26–32, can be translated in several ways, as it contains several grammatical issues with plurality. The first part of the colophon in vi, ll. 26–28 reads *a-su-mi-it-tu an-ni-i-tu ga-ba-re-e ša-lal-ti ka-nik di-nim*. Either the term *gabarû* designates the *asumittu* (= *kuduru* monument) as a ‘copy’ or it refers to the *Vorlages* in the plural. The CAD G: 2a, s.v. *gabarû*, translates *a-su-mi-it-tu an-ni-i-tu ga-ba-re-e ša-lal-ti ka-nik di-nim* as ‘this stela is a copy of three sealed documents with court decisions’. As opposed to the CAD, Paulus (2014: 409) interprets *gabarû* as a designation of the *Vorlages* (but applies the term ‘copy’ for the *Vorlage*): ‘Dieser *a¹su¹mittu* (besteht aus) drei Kopien gesiegelter Rechtsurkunden’. Both translations are problematic. The complete colophon reads:

a-su-mi-it-tu an-ni-i-tu ga-ba-re-e ša-lal-ti ka-nik di-nim ša ^{d1}ISKUR-MU-ŠUM₂^{na} ^{d1}ISKUR-MU-URU₃ ^ù *Me-li-Ši-pak* 3 LUGAL.MEŠ (Akkadian transcription: *asumittu annitu gabarê/-ê šalalti kanik dīnim ša Adad-šuma-iddina Adad-šuma-ušur ū Meli-Šipak 3 šarrē*), ‘this *asumittu* (= *kuduru*) is (=copied) from three exemplars of the sealed document/ is a copy of three exemplars of the sealed document of the legal case of (king) Adad-šuma-iddina, (king) Adad-šuma-ušur, and of (king) Meli-Šipak, the three kings.’ (MŠ 4, BBSt. No. 3: vi 26–32)

According to MŠ 4 (BBSt. No. 3): vi 26–32 the *kuduru* inscription (*asumittu annitu*, ‘this *asumittu* (= *kuduru*)’) consists of three exemplars of legal documents of three kings. *ša-lal-ti* may either stand for the genitive singular *šalašti(m)* and follow the noun counted in its appropriate case ending, or it may stand in the status absolutus and count the following items. Unfortunately, none of these syntactical reconstructions strictly adheres to the expected grammatical rules, as there are issues with plurality.

⁴⁴ A *narû* is a stone monument (CAD N/1: 364a, s.v. *narû*), see Paulus 2014: 43–46 and Slanski 2003.

There are either three exemplars of the sealed document or a copy of three sealed documents of the legal case(s) of three (!) kings. These three exemplars may be designated as *ga-ba-re-e ša-lal-ti* (*gabarē šalašti*) of ‘the sealed document of the legal case’ (*ka-nik di-nim*, *kanik dīnim*). *ga-ba-re-e ša-lal-ti* may be the genitive plural *gabarē šalašti*, and not a nominative singular. If a number follows the counted noun, it often appears in the free form with the appropriate case ending (Huehnergard 2011: 238–239). In the case of *gabarē šalašti* we would expect a genitive construction: ‘This *asumittu* (= *kudurru*) of/from three exemplars (= *Vorlagen*) of the sealed document of the legal case of’.

However, *asumittu annītu* does not stand in the *status constructus*, but in the free form (*status rectus*), and a *ša*, which would connect the head noun with the dependent, is missing. Although *ša* is optional at this time, one may wonder whether this is a sign that *ga-ba-re-e* refers to the preceding noun *asumittu annītu*, ‘this *asumittu*’ as a ‘copy’. If this was the case, then *gabarē* would be a singular *status constructus* with a long last syllable *-ē* as a loan word from Sumerian **gabarī**, and *šalašti* would count the following substantives, *ka-nik di-nim* (*kanik dīnim*). *šalašti* is a form of the absolute form in the feminine (*status absolutus*, von Soden 1995: 96) with a masculine noun counted (Streck 2011: 43).⁴⁵ However, *kanik dīnim* stands in the genitive singular, whereas items counted usually appear in the plural (which would be *kanikī dīnim/i*, see Huehnergard 2011: 238).

4.2.4 Conclusion: The Term *gabarū* and the Parallels Between the Colophons of *kudurrus* and of Literary and Scholarly Texts

Writing boards were used as a *Vorlage* for scholarly and literary texts as well as for *kudurrus*. The two *kudurru* inscriptions mentioning writing boards as a *Vorlage* employ the language known from colophons of scholarly and literary texts.

The colophon on the Isin II *kudurru* MŠZ 2: v 15–16 dates to the same period as the 10 aforementioned *kudurrus* which contain the phrase (*gabarē*) *kanik šarri ša šiprēti*, i.e., to the Isin II period. MŠZ 2: v 15–16 contains the same formula ‘GABA.RI/*gabarē/ē* WMs’. The colophon on MŠZ 2 follows the complete inscription. Thus, it is unclear which parts of the inscription originate from the writing boards; it is possible that the extensive literary passages or the results of the land survey were copied from the writing board. It is likely that the legal part stems from the *kanik šarri ša šiprēti*.

The *gabarē lē’i* mentioned in the legal part of the inscription of the Kassite *kudurru* Ka IV 2: ii 18’–28’ refers to a document, which is presented to the king and which furthers a legal claim (see Ka IV 2: i1-i8). Since the inscription says ‘*ki*¹ *ga-ba-[re-e]* ^{GES}LE.[U₅,UM] [...]’, which can either be translated as ‘According to’ the

45 NB: This form of the *status absolutus* in the feminine is not noted in Huehnergard 2011: 235.

exemplar/copy of the writing [board ...]' or as 'After¹ he/they had re[ad] the exemplar/copy of the writing [board ...]' (see above footnote 13), the damaged context either implies that the king acts upon seeing the document or that some other (legal) process is instigated (Ka IV 2: ii 30'-32' 'he/they said to [...] -šar-ilāni the following').

Due to the damage, it is unclear, which party presented the writing board to support their claim. Even if one understands *gaba[rē] lē'i* as a clay tablet, which contained a text copied from a writing board, someone who could provide any meaningful proof or had a title to a property, be it the rightful grantee('s descendant) or someone who had acquired the title from a previous proprietor, should possess the original proof of his title (see the Neo-Babylonian *ummu* document or Old Babylonian *tuppi ummātim* in Section 4.4.1 below). Therefore, the writing board mentioned in Ka IV 2: ii 18'-28' could have been an 'original' legal document.

As summarised above in Section 2, the legal process of a land grant resulted in several legal documents issued by the king, from which parts were copied onto the *kudurru*. Thus, it is possible that a writing board, which contained some sort of proof to further a someone's claim to land, served as the *Vorlage*, at least for the preserved *kudurru*, and, perhaps, as well for the previous *kudurru*. However, it is equally possible that one of the land surveyors, who owned the original document, recording the original measurements of the property, or a neighbour with claims to (part of) the property (see Ka IV 2: i23'-26') may have presented a writing board to support their claims. In this case the writing board may neither have functioned as a *Vorlage* to the *kudurru* Ka IV 2 nor to the old *kudurru*.

Apart from stylistic similarities there is no conclusive evidence in the *kudurru* inscriptions which links writing boards to the narrative introduction (praise of the king) or to the blessing and the curse formulas.

Only about 16% of *kudurru*s and *kudurru*-like textual artefact (from the Kassite to the early Neo-Babylonian period) contain a colophon.⁴⁶ These 19 colophons predominantly refer to legal documents (without a reference to the writing material) as a *Vorlage*. Only the colophon on the *kudurru*-like Isin II artefact NKU I 3 (BM 92987: Rs. 17) mentions a clay document as *Vorlage*.

Ten out of the 11 colophons on Isin II and Neo Babylonian *kudurru* inscriptions discussed in Section 4.2.3 directly follow the legal part of the *kudurru* inscription and merely suggest that the legal part was a copy of the legal document *kanik šarri ša šiprēti*. These 11 *kudurru* artefacts notably contained elaborate protective parts (curse formula), but only one of them, MŠZ 2: v 15-16, follows the protective part and mentions a writing board additionally to the *kanik šarri ša šiprēti* as *Vorlage*.

⁴⁶ Out of 79 dated and 40 undated *kudurru*-artefacts in Paulus' publication, about 19 artefacts appear to contain a colophon.

As shown above in Section 4.2.3.2, the colophon of the Kassite *kudurru* MŠ 4 (BM 90827: vi 26–32) only mentions three sealed legal documents as *Vorlage*. Although the colophon follows the complete *kudurru* inscription, including the curse formula, there is no reference to a writing board from which the text containing the curse formula may have been copied.

The *kudurru* forms prevalent in the Kassite and Isin II period (type i and ii) which could contain elaborate narrative introductions and a protective part (curse formula), do not mention writing boards as *Vorlage*. The narrative introduction is attested on 11 *kudurrus* (see Paulus 2014: 53–56, fn. 24). Out of these 11 *kudurrus* only two *kudurrus* contain a colophon (NKU I 3 (BM 92987) and NAI 3 (BM 91000)).⁴⁷ NAI 3: rev. vi 30–31 only mentions the legal document, the *gabarē kanik šarri ša šiprēti* in its colophon preceding the protective part (curse formulas). The *kudurru*-like Isin II artefact NKU I 3 (BM 92987) contains a colophon after the complete inscription (rev. 17), which explicitly says ‘verbatim from a section of (a) clay (tablet)’ (*a-na pi-i ni-is-ḫi šá ṭi-i-ṭi*); the clay tablet may have contained passages for the elaborate narrative introduction on NKU I 3: obv. 1–14. These findings speak against the hypothesis that literary passages stem from writing boards.

If the historical events in the narration date to previous centuries/dynasties, Paulus suggests that temple documents and chronicles were used. The first preserved Kassite *kudurru* from Kadašman-Ḫarbe contains a passage from chronicle P (Paulus 2014: 55), but no colophon is preserved (perhaps, due to damage). Similarly, the Isin II *kudurru* NKU I 2 (BM 90858) contains a passage from a report of a military campaign against Elam by Nabû-kudurri-ušur I, which may have had a royal inscription as *Vorlage* (Paulus 2014: 55, fn. 43 with further literature). However, NKU I 2 does not contain a colophon mentioning a writing board. This speaks against the hypothesis that literary and historicising passages on *kudurrus* and *kudurru*-like textual artefacts were copied from writing boards.

Further, another *kudurru* which contains elaborate protective parts (curse formulas) that are obviously a collation of several *Vorlages*, MŠZ 1: i 28-ii 42 (Paulus 2014: 578–79), does not contain a reference to a writing board as *Vorlage*.⁴⁸

The following conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of the colophons of *kudurru* artefacts:

- (a) Firstly, with the exception of MŠZ 2: v 15–16 all these inscriptions on *kudurru* artefacts do not support the hypothesis that literary passages were copied from writing boards.

⁴⁷ Out of these 11 *kudurrus* with a narrative introduction two other *kudurrus* contain a statement of royal sealing (MAI II 1: v 48–50 (VA 2663) and ŠŠU 1: ii 28 (VA 3614)).

⁴⁸ The colophon of the *kudurru* MŠZ 1 only mentions a *kanik šarri ša šiprēti* as *Vorlage* and follows the legal part and precedes the protective part (curse formula).

- (b) Secondly, the colophons on *kudurrus* and *kudurru*-like textual artefacts were probably not exhaustive, i.e., they did not enlist all types of documents which had been used as a *Vorlage*. Indeed, it is possible that the colophons on the *kudurrus* list the *kanik šarri ša šiprēti* (or *lē'u*) by ways of a *pars pro toto*, and other documents served as a *Vorlage*, as well.
- (c) Thirdly, it is possible that the colophon was copied ‘by accident’ together with the text preceding it from the *Vorlage*.

4.3 The Drafts for the *kudurru* Inscription

In the case of MŠZ 2, the colophon mentioning the writing board and the *kanik šarri ša šiprēti* follows the complete inscription. This may hint at a *Vorlage* consisting of a compilation of *Vorlages*, as Hunger (1968: 6–7) suggested. Hunger suggested that the colophons which list several textual artefacts, including writing boards, as *Vorlage* imply that the *Vorlage* was a compilation of several sources (Hunger 1968: 6–7). This *Vorlage* would have been composed out of the *kanik šarri ša šiprēti* and a writing board. The writing board may have contributed the results of the land survey or literary parts to the compilation.

The idea that the phrase GABA.RI WM(s) refers to a compilation corresponds to the compilation of master copies in first millennium Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions on stone monuments. Neo-Assyrian evidence suggests that writing boards were used in the process of drafting such royal inscriptions (Howard 2017: 23, 107, 125–6). Apparently, the draft could be prepared on a writing board, which was then circulated to be reviewed by the king. An interesting proof for their use can be found in the colophon from a four-column tablet of epigraphs of Ashurbanipal from Nineveh (K.2674+), which says GABA.RI ^{GEŠ}ZU šá ina IGI LUGAL šá-áš-mu-u-ni. Howard (2017: 125) translates ‘Copy of a writing board that was read before the king.’, and concludes that the master copy was a clay tablet (see Howard 2017: 126). If we translate this line as ‘The *Vorlage* (was) a writing board that was read before the king’, it implies the same procedure: the draft had been circulated and approved by the king before being copied onto a clay tablet.

Some of the epigraphs on K.2674+ appear on the walls of the Southwest Palace (Room XXXIII) or the North Palace (Room I) at Nineveh (Howard 2017: 140).⁴⁹

⁴⁹ ‘This colophon makes it clear that the epigraphs were written on a writing board, before they were copied onto a clay tablet. These epigraphs were intended for the relief panels of the North Palace and the Southwest Palace at Nineveh, and some of them are duplicated on those reliefs. This seems to imply at least two intermediate stages in the production of these epigraphs: the writing of a series of epigraphs on the writing-board, which were read out to the king and, presumably, revised; these epigraphs were then copied onto a clay tablet’ (Howard 2017: 126).

Although K.2674+ contains too many differences from the standard inscription to be the master copy (Howard 2017: 140–3), it appears that such colophons as we see on it may have ended up on the final master copy as well. If we assume a similar drafting process for the *kuduru* inscriptions, then such a colophon may have occasionally been part of a master copy from which the *kuduru* text was copied. Perhaps, the transfer of the colophon happened accidentally, when a possibly illiterate artisan copied the text, including the colophon, onto the stone monument.

Further, we have to consider the fact that donations and other legal agreements concerning the transfer of property, which were recorded on clay tablets, were not accompanied by the religious iconography applied to *kudurrus*. The divine symbols exclusively appear in the monumental context. Although Howard (2017: 2017) suggests that the master copy was a clay tablet, we have to consider that writing boards were not only the best material to draft the text, but also to draw iconographic elements before transposing them to the stone.

In Ka IV 2: ii 18'–28' a writing board is shown to the king, possibly during a legal dispute, to support a person's legal claims. Unfortunately, it is unclear who presents the writing board to the king. It could be a neighbour or some party with claims to the property. Although it is improbable that a draft or master copy had any legal implications, a draft of the inscription on a writing board would contain (parts of) the original inscription on the *kuduru* and would be some form of proof of the size of the granted and surveyed land. Thus, it remains inconclusive whether Ka IV 2: ii 18'–28' indicates the use of writing boards as a draft or even master copy.

4.4 The *ammatu* Document as a *Vorlage* for a (Part of the) *kuduru* Inscription

4.4.1 The *ammatu* Document and the *ṭuppi ummātim*

Some *kudurrus* mention the so-called *ammatu* document as a *Vorlage* for the *kuduru* inscription. The CAD : U/W: 118b-119a, s.v. *ummatu* B (*ammatu*), provides for the OB term *ummatu* and for the Kassite and early NB term *ammatu*, syllabically written 1.KÛŠ, the translation 'original document'.

Sommerfeld (1984: 305) suggests that the term *ammatu* referred to a tablet containing the results of a field measurement, since the Akkadian term *ammatu* (Sumerian KÛŠ) means 'forearm' or 'cubit' (CAD A/2: 70a-75a). This deduction is confirmed by the fact that on a number of *kuduru* monuments (CAD L: 157a; Sommerfeld 1984: 301, 304 as well as further examples in Paulus 2014: 102–4, 450, 767) the *ammatu* document, which the king sealed, is written with the Sumerogram

1 KÜŠ.⁵⁰ In one passage on a Kassite *kudurru* (Paulus 2014: 752–7), which describes the process of sealing the document with the royal seal, the Sumerogram 1 KÜŠ is

50 The CAD L: 157a, s.v. *lē'u*, lists six *kudurrus* as attestations for the use of a (sealed) writing board in the process of a royal grant and the production of a *kudurru*. However, four out of these six attestations refer to the *ammatu* document and not to a writing board. On these four *kudurrus* the alleged term *lē'u* is written DIŠ.Ú, read as *li_x-ú*. However, the reading *li_z* of the sign DIŠ is incorrect (Borger 2010: 341–42, 417; Charpin 2002: 179; Sommerfeld 1984: 304). Instead, the cuneiform signs DIŠ.Ú should be read as 1 (one) KÜŠ (Akkadian *ammatu*), which means ‘one cubit’ (the length measure, Charpin 2002:179, fn. 61; Sommerfeld 1984: 304).

No.	<i>kudurru</i>	False reading in CAD L: 175a, s.v. <i>lē'u</i>	Correct reading:
1.	Hinke <i>kudurru</i> (NKU I 1), v 8	<i>i-na ka-nak li_x(DIŠ)-ú šu-a-tu</i> , ‘during the sealing of this writing board’	<i>i-na ka-nak 1 KÜŠ šu-a-tu</i> , ‘during the sealing of this land survey document’
2.	BBSt. No. 4 (MŠ 2, ii) 1	[i]- <i>na ka-nak li_x-ú¹ u¹ r^{1M}KIŠIB¹</i> , ‘during the sealing of this writing board’	[i]- <i>na ka-nak 1 KÜŠ¹ u¹ r^{1M}KIŠIB¹</i> , ‘during the sealing of this land survey document’
3.	MDP 10: pl. 11 (MŠ 3) i 17	[<i>li_x</i>]- <i>ú.MEŠ</i> ... <i>ik-nu-uk-ši</i> , ‘he sealed the field survey document [...]’	<i>ù [1] KÜŠ.MEŠ bi-rim^{NA4}KIŠIB-šu an aḥ-rat u₄-mi ik-nu-uk-ši</i> , ‘And he sealed the land survey document with the impression of his seal for the future days’
4.	MDP 6: 35 pl. 9, 10 (MAI I 1: iii) 10–12, 14–16	<i>li_x-ú</i> [...] <i>ik-nu-uk-ma</i> , ‘he sealed the writing board and [...]’, and <i>i-na ka-nak li_x-ú</i> , ‘during the sealing of this writing board’	<i>1 KÜŠ ù ṭup-pi A.ŠA ka-nik di-ni ik-nu-uk-ma</i> , ‘He sealed the land survey document, the clay tablet of the lands, (and) the sealed document of this legal case’, and <i>i-na ka-nak 1 KÜŠ ù ṭup-pi A.ŠA^{NA4}KIŠIB di-ni šu-a-tu</i> , ‘during the sealing of this land survey document, the clay tablet of the lands, (and) the sealed document of this legal case’.

Further examples for the use of the Sumerogram 1.KÜŠ for the *ammatu* document on *kudurrus*, in the context of the sealing process of the *ammatu* document, are MDP 1: 178 pl. 384 (Sb 791+Sb 6432): ii 10 ([*i-na ka-na*]-*ak¹ 1.KÜŠ šu-a-tu₄*, ‘[During the sea]lling of the *ammatu* document (. . . were present)’) and Sumer 23: 45–62 pl. 1–6 (IM 67953): i 21’ ((*i-na ka-na-ak 1.KÜŠ*, ‘during the sealing of the *ammatu* document’); see Paulus 2014: 102–4, 449–454, 766–768. Also note Slanski’s (2003: 78–79) discussion of Steinkeller’s suggestion to read DIŠ.Ú as GEŠTA-ú for *gišṭú* (GEŠ.DA), ‘wooden writing tablet’, supposedly a loanword from Sumerian ^{8e}da, ‘wooden writing board’. Akkadian *gišṭú* is attested in Neo-Assyrian colophons (AHw: 294; CAD G: 110; e.g. in KAR 164 (Enūma eliš) or KAR 307 (mythical explanatory text)). ‘Although its precise reading at present remains uncertain, DIŠ-ú clearly signifies something written upon and sealed, and a wooden writing board seems the most likely object’ (Slanski 2003: 79).

replaced with the syllabic writing *am-ma-tam: ina kanāk šarri ša lā paqāri ṭuppam ū ammatam ša eqli šuāti ibrūmma*, ‘and with the seal of the king against (future) vindication he sealed the tablet and the field survey document’, IM 5527 ii 4).

Was das Siegeln der “Elle” genau besagen soll, ist mir allerdings von der Sache her nicht recht klar. Ist gemeint, daß die Abmessungen des Feldes im einzelnen erfaßt und für alle Zeit rechtlich verbindlich niedergelegt und versiegelt wurden? “Elle” wäre dann ein abgekürzter Ausdruck und stünde sinngemäß für “(Tafel mit den) Daten der Feldvermessung”. (Sommerfeld 1984: 305)

Charpin (2002: 178) suggests that the Kassite *ammatu* document is a successor of the Old Babylonian *ṭuppi ummātim*. The terms *ṭuppi/ṭuppāt* or *kanikāt ummātim* designated the title deeds, which a former owner of a property was obliged⁵¹ to transfer to a new one.⁵² The transfer of the property deeds had two essential purposes: to enable a verification of the legality of the transaction and to prevent the former owner from contesting the rights of the new owner by producing his title deeds. If the seller was unable to provide the property titles to the purchaser,⁵³ an extra clause was added to a purchase contract or a new legal document was drawn up which obliged the seller to find and provide the lost documents. This led to the creation of a type of document called ‘Quasi-Hüllentafeln’ (tablets having the appearance of a sealed envelope without a tablet inside), which were issued to replace the unavailable or lost *ṭuppi*

51 CT 48: 82 shows that it was obligatory to transfer the *ṭuppāt ummātim*: according to CT 48: 82 the sellers sold only a part of their property to the purchaser, but they were obliged to hand over the *ṭuppāt ummātim* for their entire property. In order to protect their title to the remaining land, they drew up the document CT 48: 82 to prevent the purchaser or the purchaser’s family from claiming the remainder of the plot based on the *ṭuppāt ummātim* (Charpin 1986: 128; Wilcke 1982: 480–481).

52 If owners of land exchanged plots of land, they also exchanged their title deeds (see Charpin 1986: 129–131). Charpin suggests that title deeds relating to properties were inherited together with the objects to which they belonged; the example RA 14, 95 shows that it was sufficient for an heir to a house in Ur to show the purchase document of his deceased brother to the judges in Larsa to prove his rightful ownership of the house (Charpin 1986: 132). Charpin (1986: 135–138) also presents two OB purchase contracts from the reign of Samsu-ditana, which provide us with a detailed history of the purchased land, which implies that the scribes had consulted the *ṭuppāt ummātim*-documents corresponding to the successive stages in the history of these lands.

53 In the purchase contract YOS 13: 95 a clause was added to oblige the sellers to provide the purchasers with the *kanikāt ummātim* which had been lost 92 years earlier (Wilcke 1982: 471–472). Similarly, in CT 6: 6, the brothers of a deceased *nadītu*-priestess claim that they cannot provide the purchaser with the *ṭuppāt ummātim ū sirdē*, since these were kept in the cloister of their late sister. The clause also states that the *ṭuppāt ummātim ū sirdē* would in any case belong to the purchaser, if it would happen to resurface. Similarly, YOS 13, 203 says that in the case that the lost *kanikāt ummātim* resurfaces in a tablet basket of a family member of the seller’s family, then it will be delivered to the purchaser, preventing a family member of the seller to claim ownership (vindication). For further examples see Charpin 1986: 121–140.

ummātim. This replacement, the ‘Quasi-Hüllentafel’, was drawn up on the basis of the testimony of persons involved in the former transactions or of witnesses to the older contracts (Voet and van Lerberghe 2014: 262).

The OB purchase contract CT 45: 102 from Sippar reveals that the *ṭuppāt ummātim*-tablets were, in fact, property deeds: in CT 45: 102 the *ṭuppāt ummātim* consist of two *ṭuppāt zittim* (rev. 11–12), which record the inheritance of two men called Bikkum and Ibni-Marduk (rev. 12–13), and one *ṭuppi šimātim* (rev. 14–15), a purchase contract, which Bikkum had received, when he bought a plot, and which he had explicitly acquired together with a *ṭuppi šurdē* (rev. 16; see Charpin 1986: 123–125, fn. 11).

Il apparaît donc que la coutume de la transmission des titres de propriété était générale en Babylonie: on la trouve attestée de Sippar à Ur, et quelque soit le mode de transfert (dot, vente, héritage ou échange). Les titres ainsi transmis sont désignés à partir du règne d’Hammurabi par l’expression *ṭuppāt* (ou *kanikāt*) *ummātim*, dont l’usage est parfaitement clair, même si son étymologie l’est moins. (Charpin 1986: 138)

Von Soden (1981: 1414b), who suggests the translation ‘Besitzstandsurkunde?’ for the term *ṭuppi ummatim*, s.v. AHw: 1414b, *ummatu(m)* I, translates the term *ummatu* as ‘Hauptmasse’, but also ‘Stamm-, Heimateinheit’. This is equivalent to the CAD: U/W: 116b–118b, s.v. *ummatu* A, which translates ‘main contingent, unit (of an army or workforce), mainstay, principal support, main part (of something)’ etc. Von Soden (1981: 1414b) explicitly refers to the Akkadian term *ummu*, ‘mother’ and to the Hebrew and Aramaic ‘*umma(t)* he. Stamm, Volk; ar. Gemeinde’ (AHw: 1414b). אַמָּא (‘*am/’ām*) means ‘people’ or ‘tribe’ (Clines 1993: 312; Huehnergard and Lambdin 2000: 33), אִמָּא (‘*ēm*) means ‘mother’ (Clines 1993: 307–309) or ‘nation’ (אִמָּא; see Clines 1993: 309) in classical Hebrew.

Charpin (1986: 138) rejects von Soden’s etymology, asserting that the OB *ṭuppi ummātim* does not refer to collective property. Instead, Charpin argues that due to the spelling *ṭup¹-pa-at um-ma-a-tim* in BE 6/2, 97 (an OB court document concerning a purchase) *um-ma-a-tim* is the plural of *ummu*, ‘mother’ (‘qu’on a ici affaire au pluriel de *ummu* (lit. «mère»)’), leading to the translation ‘the point of origin’ or ‘the previous state’, see Charpin 1986: 138:

L’acception particulière de *ummu* dans ce contexte est certainement «le point d’origine», «l’état antérieur», tout comme le sumérien *ama* dans l’expression *ama-ar-gi₂*. (Charpin 1986: 138)

Charpin’s etymology is supported by the Neo-Babylonian term for original title deeds, *ummi eqli* (Pohl 1939: 124; see also Ungnad 1937: 17).⁵⁴ Already Wilcke (1982:

54 ‘*ummu eqli* (S. 17) dürfte etwa bedeuten: die Tafel, die die Genealogie des Grundstücks (Teilung, Kauf usw.) enthält mit seinen Lasten. Denn neben der Kauf- (oder Tausch)urkunde ist diese ‘Grundstücksmutter’ natürlich für den neuen Besitzer von Wert.’ (Pohl 1939: 124; see also Ungnad

478) had connected the OB *tuppi ummātim* with the NB *ummu*-documents. Wunsch (1999: 402; Wunsch 2000) defines the Neo-Babylonian *ummi eqli*, the ‘mother of the field’, as a ‘previous purchase contract’ (see also Wunsch 1988: 364).

It was a regular practice to hand over such records (or copies of them) to the buyer; the vendor was often obliged to do so under the terms of the contract. In many archives such retroacts have been found and identified (Wunsch 1999: 402).

Thus, it is no surprise that Charpin reconstructs the *ammatu* document as a property deed sealed by the king, which served as a proof of the royal grant, and which was issued at the beginning of the “chain of transmission” of the property (and related title deeds; Charpin 2002: 178–179, fn. 62).⁵⁵

Paulus (2014: 102–104), however, argues that the Kassite *ammatu* document was not identical with title deeds (of gift), but that it was a term for a separate document, which recorded the results of the land survey of the granted property. Considering the fact that the Kassite *ammatu* document could be written with the Sumerogram 1 KÙŠ, which means ‘one cubit’ (the length measurement; CAD A/2: 70a-75a; CAD U/W: 118–119; ‘coudée’ Attinger 2019: 118b; Powell 1987–1990: 462–463),⁵⁶ it seems axiomatic to relate the *ammatu* document to the Akkadian term for the length measurement (CAD A/2: 70a-75a; Sommerfeld 1984: 305). Furthermore, the measuring stick used for the land survey had the length of one cubit (Paulus 2014: 102). In Paulus’ model of the land granting process (2014: 91–104), the issuance and the sealing of the *ammatu* document after the land survey and before witnesses is step 3 (see the summary above, and in more detail in Paulus 2014: 102–3). The measuring of the land is attested in *kudurru* inscriptions since late Kassite king Meli-Šipak (see Paulus 2014: 96–97, 101, 362). Since the reign of his son Marduk-apla-iddina the list of witnesses could be introduced by phrases such as ‘during the measuring (were present)/(they) were walking next to the surveyor’s

1937: 17). As opposed to this, San Nicolò (1947: 290, fn. 2; 294, fn. 3) defines the ‘Feldmutter’ as a legal document containing information about plots of agricultural land, to which the owner of a property had the rights, but explicitly denies that it was the original title deed. Instead, he compares the *ummi eqli* to the Ancient Greek ἀμφοριασμός or ἀμφοριον documents, which he interprets as land survey documents, containing the measurements of the land (‘Urkunde, welche die Grenzvermessung festlegt’).

55 ‘Je me demande si l’on ne peut pas considérer qu’il s’agit d’une variante de *ummatum* et rapprocher l’expression de celle bien connue en paléo-babylonien de *tuppi* (var. *tuppât*) *ummātim* «document(s) originel(s)». Le roi, en scellant la tablette de donation alors établie, produit un document qui sera à l’origine de la « chaîne de transmission » postérieure du bien et des titres de propriété afférents.’ (Charpin 2002: 178–179)

56 The classical Hebrew word for ‘cubit’, אַמָּא (‘*ammā*’, see Clines 1993: 310–311; Huehnergard and Lambdin 2000: 33) relates to the Akkadian *ammatu* (Scott 1958: 208), as well.

measuring rope:’ (see Paulus 2014: 101, fn. 259 and the examples in the listed *kuduru* inscriptions).

Bislang konnte also gezeigt werden, dass sich die *ammatu*-Tafel auf die Vermessung des Landes bezieht, und zusammen mit dem Schenkungsdokument vom König ausgestellt und gesiegelt werden konnte, wobei unwesentlich ist, ob der Begünstigte Ersteigentümer ist, oder nicht. Das deckt sich nicht mit Charpin’s Vorstellung, dass die altbabylonische *ṭuppi ummatim* auf die Ersteigentümer des Landes verweist [...] (Paulus 2014: 103)

Taking everything into account, Paulus’s reconstruction of the *ammatu* document as field survey document differs significantly from Charpin’s reconstruction as original title deed. In order to align the OB *ṭuppi ummātim* with the Kassite *ammatu*, Paulus rejects Charpin’s reconstruction of the OB *ṭuppi ummātim* as original title deed and refers to Wilcke’s (1982: 481) comparison of the OB *ṭuppi ummātim* to an entry in a modern German land registry.⁵⁷ However, Wilcke also understands the *ṭuppi ummātim* as original title deed, which documented a change of ownership (‘Ursprungsurkunde’ or ‘Vorerwerbsdokumente’, Wilcke 1982: 466–483). His comparison to an entry in a modern German land registry (‘Grundbucheintrag’) supports Charpin’s interpretation, since the Grundbuch also records a chain of title to a plot of land and, thus, provides information about the former owners of a plot of land.⁵⁸

57 Wilcke (1982: 481) compares the function of a *ṭuppi ummātim*, which is mentioned twice in the OB document CT 48: 82 and which contains information about the size of a plot of land, to an entry in a modern land registry (see above footnote 51 and the differing transliterations and interpretations of Charpin 1986: 128, fn. 25 and Wilcke 1982: 480–481).

‘Die *ṭuppi ummatim* gibt dieser Urkunde zufolge den genauen Umfang eines Grundstücks an und begründet eine Ausgleichspflicht, falls andere Urkunden von ihr abweichen; sie hat also eine ähnliche Funktion wie heute ein Grundbucheintrag’ (Wilcke 1982: 481).

58 The comparison is problematic, as the systems of land registry differ between Civil and Common Law countries. In modern Germany, the German ‘Grundbuch’ belongs to local courts and it contains, among other information, the names of current and previous owners. Please note that changes of rights to land do not take effect before they are registered in the land registry. Effectively, the ‘Grundbuch’ grants the title by registration, and, thus, bears a resemblance to the Torrens system in Common Law Countries, which means that the state guarantees a title and that the land registry grants high indefeasibility of a registered owner.

As opposed to this, Common Law countries with a deeds registration system only register an already existing title, which an owner can, for example, prove by ‘chain of title’, i.e. by tracing the chain of ownership back to the earliest grant of land by the crown to its first owner. The deeds registration only serves to make public the conveyance of title to the grantee named in the deed, and merely records an ‘instrument’, not a ‘title’. Since a deeds registration system requires an owner to prove a chain of title in order to establish his title to the land, this system bears some resemblance to Charpin’s reconstruction of the *ṭuppi ummātim*.

In order to show that the *ammatu* document was a different kind of document and not the deed of grant, which the king had issued and sealed, Paulus refers to the inscription on the *kudurru* MŠ 3 (Sb 23, MDP X, 87). According to MŠ 3 the king sealed the *ammatu* document right after drawing the boundaries of the granted land (*palāku*; CAD P: 49a-50b): *an pi-il-ki ip-lu-uk ù [1].KÛŠ.MEŠ bi-rim*^{NA4}*KIŠIB-šu an aḫ-rat u₄-mi ik-nu-uk-ši*, ‘He drew the borders (of the granted land) and he sealed the *ammatu* document with the impression of his seal for the future days’ (MŠ 3: i 16–18; the reverse of the *kudurru* monument, Paulus 2014: 103, 391).⁵⁹ Thus, Paulus (2014: 103) argues that the *ammatu* was the field survey document. The inscription on the same *kudurru* says that the king granted an unrelated garden plot to his daughter (Scheil’s column VIII; Paulus no. 4, see Charpin 2002: 179, fn. 68; Paulus 2014: 391–392), which he had bought from the governor of the Sealand province, who had bought the land from a third person. According to the inscription, the king did not measure this garden plot, which he had bought, and he did not seal an *ammatu* document (before witnesses). Instead, he provided his daughter with tablets bearing his seal impression to protect her grant from future claims, and inscribed the *kudurru* monument (viii/4 15–25).

In my opinion this particular *kudurru* inscription, MŠ 3, does not only provide us with information about the nature of the *ammatu* document, but it also implies that the *ammatu* document (sealed before witnesses) was, indeed, a different type of legal document than the OB *ṭuppi* or *kanik ummātim*, the original title deed. Both types of document appear on the same *kudurru*: in viii/4 15–19 the king transfers the original title deeds to the aforementioned garden plot, the *kanik* [...], the ‘sealed document of [...]’, from the previous owner, the governor of the Sealand province, to the new owner, his daughter.⁶⁰ Charpin (2002: 178–179) assumes that the ‘sealed document of [...]’ (*kanik* [...]) in MŠ 3: viii/4 15 was a property deed from the former owner, similar to the Old Babylonian *kanik ummātim*.⁶¹ I suggest that this implies that the *kanik* [...] in MŠ 3: viii/4 15, handed over by the previous

⁵⁹ Further below, in MŠ 3: ii 9–15, the king sealed a second tablet recording exemptions of the granted settlements (i.e. levies and *dullu*-workduties from which the population on the land grant was exempt) and recorded everything, which he had granted to his daughter, on a *kudurru* monument.

⁶⁰ Paulus 2014: 392 emends *kanik* [*kiri*], ‘the sealed document of [the garden ?]’.

⁶¹ ‘Ce passage documente deux conduites complémentaires. On a d’abord affaire à la transmission des titres de propriété antérieurs, qui prolonge une pratique bien attestée à l’époque paléo-babylonienne: le roi donna à sa fille l’acte par lequel il avait acheté ce jardin. Il rédigea en outre une tablette de donation qu’il scella; là encore, rien qui se distingue des pratiques paléo-babyloniennes. Mais, en même temps, il fit confectionner une stèle qu’il plaça dans un temple: ici se situe l’innovation. La tablette de donation scellée par lui a pour but d’éviter à l’avenir les contestations; la stèle an l’avantage d’être «pour l’éternité» (*sâtis*).’ (Charpin 2002: 178–179)

owners of the garden plot, is a different type of document than the *ammatu* document, written 1.KÜŠ in MŠ 3: i 17, which is mentioned in the same *kudurru* inscription, and which the king seals after measuring land. One thing which speaks against an identification of the former with the latter is the different terminology used: if the Kassite *ammatu* document was the equivalent of the OB *ṭuppi ummātim* and if the *kanik* [...] was, in fact, an *ammatu* document, then one wonders why it was not called *ammatu* document. A term such as *kanik* [*a/ummātim* ?] would be exceptional and unlikely, considering the occurrence of the term the *ammatu*, written 1.KÜŠ, on the same *kudurru* MŠ 3: i 17.

Secondly, as argued above, there is an obvious relation between the term *ammatu* and the length measure *ammatu*, both written with the sumerogram KÜŠ (Powell 1987–1990: 462–463).⁶² As opposed to this, the OB *ṭuppi* or *kanik ummātim* as well as the NB *ummi eqli* are etymologically linked to the term *ummu*, ‘mother’ (see above).

Thirdly, the *ammatu* document appears on Kassite *kudurru* inscriptions in the context of measuring land, which had not been transferred from previous owners, and its function was primarily to record the results of the field survey (Paulus 2014: 102–104). Thus, the function of the Kassite *ammatu* document as a field survey document differs significantly from that of the OB original title deeds called *ṭuppi/ṭuppāt* or *kanikāt ummātim*.

We can gather from this that Kassite *ammatu* documents were not necessarily the same as OB *ṭuppi ummātim* documents, but that it is more likely that they designated a different type of legal (!) document, which recorded the results of the field survey and which was sealed and issued before witnesses.

⁶² In the light of von Soden’s linking of the term ‘*ummatum*’ to Classical Hebrew and Aramaic אֲמָתַי or אֲמָ (‘*am/ām*, ‘people, tribe’ or ‘nation’) and אֵם (‘*ēm*, ‘mother’; see Clines 1993: 307–309, 12; Huehnergard and Lambdin 2000: 33) in the AHw: 1414b, it needs to be pointed out that some researchers etymologically relate the Classical Hebrew term for the length measure ‘cubit’, אֲמָתַי (‘*ammā*, Clines 1993: 310–311; Huehnergard and Lambdin 2000: 33) with the term אֵם, ‘*ēm* for ‘mother’. According to Stone (2014: 2) the Hebrew term for cubit (‘*ammā*) ‘can be interpreted as “the mother of the arm” or the origin, that is, the forearm/cubit’. See Gesenius’ (1859: 63) translation of אֲמָתַי as ‘mother of the arm’ in ‘A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament’ as well as Davidson’s (1848: 31) etymological relation of אֲמָתַי, ‘cubit’ to אֵם, ‘mother’ with the translation ‘mother of the arm’ in ‘The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon’.

However, already in 1883 Peters noted in a review of Gesenius’ Dictionary (‘Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament’) that he doubts the connection of the אֲמָתַי, ‘cubit’ with אֵם, ‘mother’ (see Peters 1883: 250). Peters (1883: 250–251) writes ‘that connection as shown from the vocalization, cannot be one of direct derivation of the former from the latter. Assyrian *ummu*, *mother*, Arabic *um* or *im*, Syriac *emo*, and Ethiopic *em* all show an impure vowel from which the pure vowel of אֲמָתַי could scarcely be derived, although, of course, both might come from the same root.’ Further, Peters (1883: 251) call the explanation that אֲמָתַי is the ‘mother of the arm’ a ‘pure piece of rabbinism, a mere play of fancy’.

Ka IV 2: ii 18'–28' does not contain sufficient information to support a claim that the writing board contained an *ammatu*. Ka IV: i 9–26' implies that the writing board was shown in the context of a bipartite legal dispute: the first court case (Ka IV 2: i 9–ii 2–3 ?) was judged by king Kurigalzu II, witnesses were called (i 22'), and the 'lower' neighbour was questioned (i 23'–26'). The second court case was judged by king Kaštiliaš IV (Ka IV 2: ii 3–4 ? – 32'), and a witness or a claimant shows a *gaba[rē] lē'i*, 'an exemplar/copy of a writing board', to the king (see Ka IV 2: ii 18'–28'). The disputes may have concerned the borders of the land grant, since apparently a 'lower' neighbour was questioned (i 23').

One possibility is that the person providing the writing board had inherited or acquired the title to (a part of) the property. In this case he would have received original proof for his title from the previous proprietor (such as the Neo-Babylonian *ummu* document or Old Babylonian *ṭuppi ummātim*). A second possibility is that he had received a land grant. In that case his *gaba[rē] lē'i* could have contained one of the legal documents produced during the process of the land grant (or a copy thereof). The *ammatu* would be one of these legal documents. Although one could compare the narrative to the Kassite *kudurnu* KaE II 1: ii 6', in which a *kaniku*, 'a sealed legal document', is shown to king Kadašman-Enlil II (1263–1255, see Brinkman 2017: 36), this parallel is not enough to assume that the writing board contained the *ammatu* document.

The identity of the claimant or witness showing the writing board as well as the content of the writing board are unclear; it is possible that the writing board contained a legal document, such as the original record of the land survey. It is, however, unlikely that the original surveyor was still alive to show the record, as there are more than 70 years between the rule of Kurigalzu II and Kaštiliaš IV (cf. Brinkman 2017: 36).⁶³ However, a descendant of the land surveyor or of the grantee or (of) another official could have been in possession of the original writing board and shown it as proof for the original dimensions of a land grant (NB: only since king Meli-Šipak the measurements of the land survey were noted in the *kudurnu* inscription). If the writing board functioned as some kind of proof for the measurements of the granted property, then this would have been the traditional use of writing boards for the land survey (see below 4.4.2). In conclusion: the writing board in Ka IV 2: ii 18'–28' only shares an unspecified legal quality with the *ammatu* document, and the context of a land dispute and interrogation of neighbours makes it possible that it contained the *ammatu*.

⁶³ Paulus (2014: 362) suggests that the man called Nimgirabi-Marduk or his father, who are mentioned in i 9–10, were the land surveyors. However, Nimgirabi-Marduk or his father could have held a different provincial office and/or had (also) been present at the land survey (for the officials present at the land survey see Paulus 2014: 96–104). The person showing the writing board has a different patronym (Uppa-...], see Ka IV 2: ii 18'–19').

4.4.2 Land Surveys on Writing Boards

The question remains, how the references to writing boards fit into the process of transposition from portable media onto a monument deposited in a temple. I would like to suggest the possibility that *ammatu* documents were recorded on writing boards. The inscription on Kassite and early NB *kudurrus* do not inform us whether the *ammatu* documents were inscribed on clay tablets or writing boards. As I have argued in the previous section, it is unlikely that the Kassite *ammatu* document, which recorded the results of the field survey, was the same as the OB *ṭuppi/ṭuppāt* or *kanikāt ummātim*, which was a term for the original title deeds to a property. Since purchase contracts and other legal agreements concerning the transfer of property are preserved on clay tablets, OB *ṭuppi ummātim* documents had to be clay tablets. Kassite *ammatu* documents, however, could have been written on a writing board.

The traditional use of writing boards makes it likely that they were used to record the results of the field survey for the *kudurnu*. It is evident in textual sources from periods preceding the Kassite period that some land surveys and ground plans were recorded on wooden boards. However, I am not aware of textual evidence from the Kassite period. Since writing boards were used to record land surveys since the third millennium BC in Mesopotamia (for an overview of the traditional use see Michalowski 2021: 77–82), I suggest that they were used to record the results of the field survey for the *kudurrus*, as well. Further, we know that both Kassite *ammatu* documents as well as writing boards were used as a *Vorlage* for Kassite and early NB *kudurrus* and as some kind of (legal) proof in a dispute concerning a Kassite land grant (Ka IV 2).

Writing boards were used to transfer information to and from clay tablets and stone artefacts throughout the three millennia of Mesopotamian history. We have mentions of the use of writing boards (called **le-um**) from the end of the third millennium, beginning shortly before the Ur III period.⁶⁴ The third millennium sources indicate that **le-ums** were used to list income and expenditures in bookkeeping, to list workers and perhaps the provision allocated to them, and for land surveys. The writing boards were employed as a more trustworthy source, if other media were considered suspicious. **Le-ums** were stored in baskets together with clay tablets.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ RTC: 221 (P216993), HSM: 6392; MVN 11: 93 (P116107), BM 109149 (Maekawa 1997: 117, 138, Text 122; P102679), HSM: 6388; MVN 11: 91 (P116105), UET 3: 1097 (P137422), TJA pl. 53, IOS: 15 1–11 (P134109), UTI 4: Um. 2870 (P140889), MVN 13: 241 (P117013), MVN 16: 797 (P118845).

⁶⁵ Maekawa (1997: 121) doesn't believe that the **le-ums** used for field surveys were writing boards. Instead, he suggests that the term **le-um** referred to clay tablets ('round tablets') attested for yield assessments and sheep counting, which may have been used by scribes during the outdoor survey in the Ur III period. He argues that they may have been discarded after their content was transferred to a proper account.

Two Ur III clay tablets, MVN 11, 93 and BM 109149, contain lists of workers, who cultivated subsistence fields. Both lists claim to be copied from writing boards. A third Ur III tablet, MVN 11, 91, rev. 1–3, states that an entry about the size of a field had been changed on the writing board: the numbers were apparently reduced after it had been copied from the writing board to a different medium. The reduction may have been noticed after comparison. This implies that the exact measurements of fields, or, perhaps, those of subsistence fields, were usually recorded on a writing board.

As the royal hymns and inscriptions from the period of Gudea, Šulgi and Lipit-Eštar show, **geš-hurs**, ‘ground plans on wooden boards’ (**geš- -hur**, ‘to incise wood’, Veenhof 1995: 316)⁶⁶ were used for architectural planning and building activities by the ruler, but also for field surveying, and agricultural administration. As opposed to the term for writing, *šaṭārum* (**sar**), the term implies a different medium (wood, leather, sand) than clay and a different process: incising instead of pressing (reed) into clay (Pientka-Hinz 2017: 329). On cylinder A of the temple hymn of Gudea of Lagaš (ca. 2143–2124 BC) writing boards made of Lapis lazuli (Cyl. A: v 3, and vi 4: **le-um-za-gin₃**, ‘a lapis writing board’) are mentioned. The ground-plan of a temple is placed on these writing boards.⁶⁷ Ninduba’s ground-plan of the temple on a lapis lazuli plate is presumably held by Gudea on his lap in the famous statue B from Girsu, also known as ‘l’architecte au plan’ (Veenhof 1995: 316; Winter 2010: 273). In Šulgi hymn C: 46 and 48, the **geš-hur**, the writing board, appears in the context of the ‘plan(ning) of

⁶⁶ According to Winter (2010: 273, fn. 3) the term **geš-hur**, Akkadian *uṣurtu*, or *gešhurru* (Veenhof 1995: 316), which Ninduba writes on the lapis lazuli board, is usually applied to a wooden writing board, ‘on which a ‘plan’ or anything else would be drawn’. The primary meaning is ‘drawing’, ‘groundplan’ (‘1. drawing, plan, engraving, picture, relief, 2. (divine) design, plan, concept, ordinance [...]’, CAD U/W: 290b), and **geš- -hur** means ‘to incise wood’ and was used for royal architectural planning, but also for royal edicts and decrees (Pientka-Hinz 2017: 329; Veenhof 1995: 316). ‘The term is very frequent in literary texts with the meaning ‘plan, regulation’, referring to divine or meta-divine plans or rules, frequently also rites of temples and cults, once ‘drawn’ and hence fixed, which are at the basis of phenomena and ritual acts and determine how they should be and should function. [...] The terminology is that of an architect, surveyor or accountant rather than that of a scribe. Hendursaga is the ‘accountant’ (ŠITA₅.DÜ) of Nindar, ‘for whom Nanše made the stick and staff grow for (drawing?) the **geš.hur.**’ (Veenhof 1995: 316–7)

⁶⁷ In the first instance (Cyl. A: iv 25–26) the ground-plan of a house (**e₂-a geš-hur-bi**) is ‘placed’ on the writing board. Gudea first spots a woman in his dream, who holds a stylus (**gi-dub-ba**) made out of shiny metal, which she places (**ga₂**) on ‘a tablet of favourable stars’ (**dub mul-an du₁₀-ga**). Then, in v 2–4, it says that a warrior held a lapis lazuli board (**le-um za-gin₃**) on which he was setting the ground-plan of a house (Edzard 1997: 72). In the second instance (Cyl. A: vi 3–5) Nanše explains to Gudea that Ninduba ‘inserted’ or ‘set’ the ground-plan of the temple (**e₂-a geš-hur-ba im-mi-si₃-si₃-ge**) into a lapis lazuli plate (**le-um za-gin₃**, Edzard 1997: 72). Furthermore, on Cyl. A: xvii 17 Enki ‘corrects (=straightens)’ out the plan (**geš-hur-bi**) of the temple.

the land'.⁶⁸ In the case of the hymn to Lipit-Eštar (1934–1924), the king receives the field measuring equipment from Nisaba together with a *lē'um*, a 'writing board' (Römer 1965: 24–25; Sjöberg 1975: 174–175). However, references to wood and wax as writing or drawing materials are scarce in southern Mesopotamia until the second half of the first millennium BC (Michalowski 2021 77–78). Whether such wooden boards were used by local officials to measure out the fields on-site, as Steinkeller (2004: 75–6) suggested, can only be speculated. Wooden boards were lighter and easier to carry around, and the drawings of ground plans and field borders could be incised on wax more accurately than on clay (Heisel 1993: 51–2).⁶⁹

At the beginning of the second millennium BC, in the Old Assyrian trade colony *kārum* Kaniš in Anatolia, it is attested that writing boards were used for bookkeeping, and for legal documents involving the local Anatolian population.⁷⁰ An Old Babylonian letter documents the drawing of architectural ground plans, but does not explicitly mention the medium (*ušurtam ešērum*; Pientka-Hinz 2017: 329).

68 Klein (1986: 1–2) writes: 'In this stanza, where Šulgi boasts of having studied writing, field surveying, agricultural administration, architecture, accounting and mathematics, there is a line which [...] seems now to refer to the king's competence in writing monumental inscriptions.'

al^{ḡes} u₃-šub a₂-ba ḡeš ḡa₂-ḡa₂ ḡeš-hur uš ki tag maš-dar, ki-gal-lum-ma saḡ tag-ga šu gal du₇-a-me-en₃ dub za-gin₃-na pa mu-ni-e₃ šudum niḡ₂-šid ḡeš-hur kalam-ma-ka igi-ḡal₂ šum₂-mu-bi a₂-bi-še₃ in-ga-zu, 'I am greatly expert in assigning work with the pickaxe and the brick-mould, in drawing plans, in laying foundations, and in writing cuneiform inscriptions on pedestals; I can make things absolutely clear on tablets of lapis lazuli. I also have a solidly based knowledge of the intelligent implementation of the counting, accounting and planning of the Land' (Šulgi hymn C: 45–49; ETCSL 2.4.2.03).

69 Heisel (1993: 51) notes that clay tablets containing texts rarely measure more than 10 cm in sidelength, and only a minority of the attested clay tablets are larger than that. The largest clay tablets with text measure ca. 30 × 20 cm. The clay tablets containing drawings of ground plans of buildings have sidelengths of ca. 10 cm. The maps of cities (e.g. Nippur) are preserved on clay tablets of above-average size (the largest clay tablet with a ground-plan measures 23 × 31 cm; Heisel 1993: 51). Drawings in clay had to be large if precision and detail were important, since surface irregularities, inclusions and coarser particles in the clay made it difficult to draw exact and detailed plans on smaller clay tablets. Clay tablets reaching a sidelength of more than 40 cm were probably not in use, as they would have been too heavy, fragile and cumbersome (Heisel 1993: 51–2).

70 Wax tablets are mentioned twice in sources from *kārum* Kaniš, once among cultic equipment and once in a letter, which had been sent from Assur and which concerned accounting. Furthermore, a type of legal document recording debts from the native population in Anatolia (*i/ušurtum*) is believed to have been a wooden wax-covered writing board (note, however, opposing views by Veenhof 1995: 311–32). In the Hittite kingdom writing boards were more common due to the availability of wood and wax, see Waal 2012: 291–6.

It has been speculated that the use of writing boards increased in the Middle Babylonian period (see Dalley 2020: 18–19 as opposed to Michalowski 2021: 80).⁷¹ The writing board was common enough in late Kassite and Isin II Babylonia to feature on *kudurrus* as a symbol of the god Nabû (Postgate 1986: 23).⁷² Further, Dalley suggests that organic perishable materials were used in the area of the First Sealand Dynasty, since on four Sealand clay tablets incised alphabetic writing can be found, related to an alphabet used on date-palm leaves found in Yemen. Additionally, a Sealand letter mentions '30 GEŠ.DA', which Dalley suggests to be a 'a writing stick without wax' (Dalley 2009: 25, no. 7:9; Dalley 2020: 18–19). Both in Kassite Babylonia and in Assyria, the names of conscripted workers and soldiers were recorded on writing boards.⁷³ They are mentioned in the context of the Kassite administration, e.g., in the Kassite period letters which were written on clay tablets (ca. 13th century BC). An example are the Kassite period letters BE 17: 51, CBS 4773 and PBS 1/2: 77, which tell us that workers (*amīlūtu*) and, possibly, rations or work material were listed on writing boards.⁷⁴

Consequently, writing boards were apparently in use in the Kassite and Isin II period, although with such a small number of references the frequency of their

71 'This, and other circumstantial matters prompted another scholar to suggest that gaps in the written record somewhat earlier, in mid-second millennium Babylonia, may be explained by a switch from clay to perishable materials such as wooden boards or palm frond ribs, but such an explanation must remain hypothetical at best' (Michalowski 2021: 80).

72 Although Dalley (2020: 18) claims that there are no indications for an administrative use of writing boards, at least four Kassite administrative sources indicate their use in the labour and cattle management.

73 Although the writing boards from the Kassite period are not attested, sizeable rosters on clay tablets specifically from the Kassite period are preserved, which record large numbers of workers (Brinkman 1980, 2004; Tenney 2011). This servile population in Nippur appears in administrative documents, such as large multi-column as well as single-column administrative rosters. They belonged to the temple and palace household in Nippur, and they received rations (Steinert 2012: 93, fn 285). I suggest that running lists of workers, rations and/or work supplies were kept on writing boards, as it is attested in the first millennium BC. Further, this seems to be suggested by one Kassite cattle muster and three Kassite letters.

The evidence from the contemporary Middle Assyrian kingdom supports my suggestion. Writing boards appear in a similar context in the kingdom of Assyria. They recorded the issuing of rations ('Verpflegungsprotokolle', Freydank 2001: 103) to large numbers of workers/soldiers under the command of high officials (Freydank 2001: 110; see also Postgate 2014: 27, 64, 245–248, fn. 21, 389, 398). They may have played a role in official surveys of manpower or workforce in the newly conquered territory and of deported population during the expansion of the Middle Assyrian kingdom after Adad-nirāri I (Freydank 2001: 110).

74 See forthcoming Zimmermann 2013.

use remains unclear.⁷⁵ It is reasonable to assume that their use probably also included the recording of measurements of the granted land in the Kassite period, as it had done in preceding periods, as well as drawings and ground plans, which would fit in well with the original meaning of **geš-hur**, ‘ground plan on a wooden boards’.

One has to account for the actual, attested field surveys and maps on clay tablets. From the Middle Babylonian period approximately four or five ground plans on clay tablets are preserved (see Bührig 2017: 347, 387, 389–391; BM 80083; BM 132254; IHS 200a 1 + 2; IM 44036, 1). They stem from Babylon and Nippur and show ground plans (and a top view) of houses (type ‘Hofhaus’) which belong to temples; only one ground plan is accompanied by a legend containing measurements, and may have been used as working drawings for a building construction project (Bührig 2017: 250–252). However, the existence of ground plans on clay tablets (see a list in the appendix by Bührig 2017: 366–407) does not negate the existence of ground plans on writing boards (just as the inscription of ‘Enūma Anu Enlil’ on the Nimrud ivory writing boards does not contradict its notation on clay tablets).

Since writing boards could be sealed, it was possible to record sealed administrative and legal documents on writing boards, including sealed *ammatu* documents. The *ammatu* document was a legal document that ‘could’ and ‘had to be’ sealed by the king, and it may even have contained curse formulas (Paulus 2014: 104, fn. 284). A grantee did not want any changes to the exact measurements of their land (a reason for the curse formulas on *kudurus*). As the measuring act was part of the conclusion of the legal process of the land grant, it was certainly not written on a temporary note. It is attested that writing boards served as a permanent medium both for administrative and scholarly texts in the first millennium (Finke 2003: 58; Jursa 2004: 170–178; Kozuh and Nielsen 2021: 148–145; Parpola 1983: 4; Robson 2019: 126); it is possible that they served this purpose already in the second half of the second millennium BC. While one may argue that it was an ‘advantage’ of writing boards that inscriptions in wax could easily be changed, this does not make them unsuitable for legal acts, since writing boards were used as legal documents, as well (most notably in Anatolia), and could be sealed: although it is unclear how writing boards were sealed, it is commonly proposed that a cord was wrapped around the board and tied into a knot, to which a clay bulla was attached, which was then sealed (Symington 1991: 120–1; MacGinnis 2002: 223; Postgate 1986: 23).⁷⁶ A Middle Assyrian text contains a reference to a sealed (!) writing board

75 The small number of references may be due to the poor state of publication and small number of sites which have yielded Kassite archives, see Clayden 2020: 85–96.

76 The Ulu Burun diptych shows that writing boards could also be fastened with a cord wrapped around a hook out of wood, metal, or ivory (Nemet-Nejat 2000: 255). The Hittite clay bullae from the

(MSP 10: pl. 11 i 17), see Postgate 1986: 23. It appears that in the Neo-Assyrian period, under Sargon II and Sennacherib, stamp seals became more popular on clay bullae, which were supposedly used to seal writing boards (Dalley and Postgate 1984: 3, 73–5).⁷⁷ In this context it is important to note that in the late Kassite period the seal ring, *unqu*, which contained a stamp seal, is attested (the most common seal type in the Kassite period is the cylinder seal). At least one Kassite clay document from Ur and five Kassite clay objects from Nippur bear stamp seal impressions. Thus, we can conclude that already in the late Kassite period, stamp seals and seal rings were used (Stiehler-Alegria Delgado 1996: 47–8).⁷⁸ So far, none of the sealed clay lumps and bullae from Kassite Nippur have been identified as sealings of writing boards. Stiehler-Alegria Delgado (1996: 46), however, notes that many sealed clay bullae were attached to strings. Strings may have been used to fasten writing boards, as evidenced by the contemporary Ulu Burun diptych, where a string was used with a hook. In this case, a sealed bulla would have been attached to the string, dangling loosely from the board.

5 Conclusion: The Use of Writing Boards as *Vorlage*

In conclusion, I would like to summarise the following observations: the inscriptions on two *kudurrus* indicate that writing boards played a role in the production of the monument *kudurru* in the Middle Babylonian period and they could

Nişantepe archive at Boğazköy were wrapped around the loosely hanging knot (Herbordt 2005: 25). ‘It is generally thought that the conically shaped clay bullae (found in large numbers at Bogazköy and Tarsus) which frequently show stringholes near the apex, not only sealed merchandise but also wooden tablets. The proposed theory that wooden boards were tied with string to which the bulla was attached is the most plausible one. Removing the string would have resulted in breaking the sealing, making an unauthorised interference of the document’s content obvious’ (Symington 1991: 120–121; MacGinnis 2002: 223).

⁷⁷ Dalley and Postgate (1984: 75) suggest that a Neo Assyrian group of clay lumps with a flat reverse bearing wood and string impressions may have been used to seal writing boards with stamp seal impressions. ‘[T]hey were all apparently applied to a wooden object with a flat surface, which had been secured with string. One obvious candidate is a box, but it is perhaps likelier, as suggested in TCAE p. 26, that they were the sealings of wooden tablets inscribed with lists of soldiers. This can hardly be proved, but it does at least provide a single adequate explanation of the string and wood impressions on the reverse, the inscriptions on the obverse, and of the royal seal. Why the lists should have required tying up and a formal sealing, we do not know, but it presumably reflects the existence of some kind of administrative obligation between the officers named and the palace’ (Dalley and Postgate 1984: 75).

⁷⁸ Further, Stiehler-Alegria Delgado notes that some cylinder seals were not rolled over the clay, but pressed into it like a stamp seal (Stiehler-Alegria Delgado 1996: 44).

appear as a legal proof in a legal dispute concerning a land grant (Ka IV 2). They may have functioned as a *Vorlage* for the complete inscription, i.e., as a draft, or just as a *Vorlage* for a part of a *kudurru* inscription.

1. The exemplar serving as a *Vorlage* was termed GABA.RI/*gabarû*. Due to the polysemy of the term *gabarû*, it is grammatically equally possible to translate GABA.RI WM(s) as “(This is) a copy of WM(s)” or as “(The *Vorlage*(s) is/are) (an) exemplar(s)/(a)copy/copies of WM(s)”. However, in order to avoid semantic inconsistencies, a uniform translation of the phrase should be aspired. Thus, the translation ‘(The *Vorlage*) is an exemplar of WM(s)’ should be preferred, since it would be consistent with the interpretation of GABA.RI TN as ‘(The *Vorlage*) is an exemplar from TN’ (see Hunger 1968: 6).
2. Some colophons in literary and scholarly texts and in monumental inscriptions (*kudurrus*) list several WM(s), indicating that they were a compilation of several *Vorlages* (see above and Hunger 1968: 6–7). Thus, the colophon on the Isin II *kudurru* MŠZ 2: v 15–16 is an indicator that writing boards served as one of several *Vorlages* alongside other legal documents (such as the ‘sealed document of the king’).
3. My study of the colophons on first millennium literary and scholarly texts in comparison with colophons on *kudurrus* and *kudurru*-like textual artefacts in Section 4.2 has led to the following conclusion: the inscriptions on *kudurru* artefacts – with the exception of MŠZ 2: v 15–16 – do not contain any hints that their literary passages had been copied from writing boards. The only parallels between both types of textual artefacts are the same colophon formulas and historicising literary passages. However, they seem to originate from a common scholarly practice in a temple context. MŠZ 2 includes a lot of literary details: a hymnic introduction and parallels to *Ludlul bēl nemēqi*. This strengthens Paulus’ theory that a writing board containing these literary passages was used as a *Vorlage*. However, MŠZ 2 explicitly mentions the measuring act in iii 6–8 (but it does not mention any witnesses or the sealing of an *ammatu* document). The colophon mentioning the writing board is positioned at the end of the complete *kudurru* inscription in MŠZ 2. Both, the literary references to *Ludlul bēl nemēqi* and/or the mentioning of the field survey, could have been copied from the writing board mentioned at the end of the inscription.
4. It is a possibility that writing boards served as draft for the *kudurru* inscription. Since writing boards allowed for a higher degree of detail and precision than clay tablets, it is possible that they were used not only to record the text of the inscription, but also its layout and iconography. We may even suppose that writing boards contained drawings (**geš-hur**), perhaps, of the divine symbols, which were later transposed onto the *kudurru* monument.

5. One possibility to consider is that writing boards may have served as the writing material for the *ammatu* documents. The function of the *ammatu* document, i.e., to be carried around during the field survey, may have influenced the choice of the writing medium, i.e., a writing board instead of a clay tablet (see above Heisel 1993: 51–2). The Kassite *kudurru* Ka IV 2: ii 18'–28' indicates that the *gabarē lē'i* contains some sort of legal proof, and may have been one of the legal documents recording the results of the land survey, such as the *ammatu* (see above Section 2 and 4.4.1). If this was true, as the context implies, then Ka IV 2: ii 18'–28' shows that writing boards could, in fact, contain legal (and, thus, sealed) documents.

One may object that the absence of any proof (physical or textual), such as a material designation of the *ammatu* document, is enough evidence to conclude that *ammatu* documents were not inscribed in wax/wood, but in clay (*argumentum ex silentio*). However, Sagan and Druyan (1997: 218) have criticized that the *argumentum ex silentio* is a weak argument, since the '[a]bsence of evidence is not evidence of absence'. In archaeological research, the *argumentum ex silentio* is only valid, if it meets two criteria (see Wallach 2019: 8): (a) there needs to be high probability that X is true, and (b) there needs to be a high probability that we would learn about X. These criteria can be applied to textual sources as well, since they are preserved on archaeological objects, i.e., on clay tablets and stone monuments (Wallach 2019: 8).⁷⁹

In order to meet criterion a (there needs to be high probability that X is true), I would like to summarise the following arguments, which in my opinion make it not only possible, but even likely, that writing boards were used as a writing material for *ammatu* documents. I would like to add the caveat that my proposition is based on circumstantial evidence, and, thus, other possibilities cannot be ruled out. As I have demonstrated in Section 4.4, there is some evidence to suggest that Kassite *ammatu* documents may not be identical with OB *tuppi ummātim* documents, which were title deeds inscribed on clay tablets. Further, I have shown that writing boards were traditionally used for land surveys in Mesopotamia. Since the legal process leading to the erection of an inscribed *kudurru* included a field survey, it is very likely that the results of the survey were documented on a writing board. Since *ammatu* documents were – according to the *kudurru* inscriptions – legal documents sealed by the king before witnesses, I have emphasised that writing boards could be sealed, and that stamp seals (rings) and wooden writing materials were used in the second half of the second millennium in Babylonia. There is even contemporary evidence, as a Middle Assyrian text contains a reference to a sealed (!) writing board (MSP 10: pl. 11 i 17; Postgate 1986: 23). Thus, it seems entirely possible that such a record of the field

⁷⁹ I would like to thank Gösta I. Gabriel for pointing me to this useful literature.

survey may have been referred to as sealed (!) *ammatu* document, but also as *lē'u*, as the two examples presented in this article show.

However, caution must be applied with regard to criterion b). Based on the scarcity of textual references to writing boards in the third and second millennium BC and of archaeological evidence, it is open to debate, whether we should have been able to acquire definite proof by now that *ammatu* documents were inscribed on writing boards, such as archaeological evidence or an undisputable material designation. Please note that the corpus of Kassite period documents is not only small and poorly published compared to other periods of Mesopotamian history, but also restricted in terms of provenance (see Clayden 2020: 85–96).

Firstly, the archaeological evidence is scarce; wood, wax and any type of chord are perishable materials and, thus, much less preserved than clay (for writing boards from the second millennium BC see e.g., the Ulu Burun writing board), and sealed clay bullae/lumps from Middle Babylonian sites have not been associated with writing boards.

Secondly, although there are a small number of textual references to the use of writing boards in the (temple) administration, for field surveys, and as a writing material for literary and scholarly series (which become more numerous in the Middle Assyrian period and in first millennium BC, see above Section 3 and 4.4.2), these references merely give us clues about their contents. Often the contents can only be deduced from the context, but it does not contain a designation for a (legal) document type, such as the *ammatu*.⁸⁰ Some researchers have interpreted material designations as a designation for document types: in Middle Assyrian textual sources, the term *lē'u* is written without the determinative GEŠ, which has led researchers to classify it as a document type on clay (see Postgate 1986: 23). Similarly, some researchers believe that the Old Assyrian *išurtum* document is a type of legal document written on clay tablets (see Veenhof 1995: 311–32). The interpretation of given material designations is difficult, even if terms such as *lē'u*, “(wooden) writing bord”, are applied.

To my knowledge, physical proof for an *ammatu* document on clay is absent. There are only references to the *ammatu* in *kudurru* inscriptions without any explicit material designation. Obviously, the preserved legal documents on clay and stone indicate that most legal documents from Mesopotamia were written on clay. This general assessment is further supported by the attested legal practice, such as breaking a clay envelope or a debt note to invalidate it. However, in this article, I would like to challenge this generalisation, especially since Anatolian and Assyrian sources testify to the sealing of writing boards.

⁸⁰ One example to consider are the references to writing boards in Middle Assyrian documents, which imply that they contained administrative lists, and, possibly, also receipts (Postgate 1986: 22–25).

Thus, criterion b) cannot be met without serious doubts. The lack of physical proof or the absence of an explicit material designation of the *ammatu* in an inscription is not enough to rule out the possibility that the *ammatu* was inscribed on a writing board (i.e. to make the *argumentum ex silentio*). On the contrary: contemporary evidence from Assyria, the traditional use of writing boards and the supposed increased use of writing boards in the Middle Babylonian period actually do make such a practice conceivable.

Even if the results of the field survey were copied from an unsealed writing board to a clay tablet, which was then sealed (i.e. the *ammatu*), the writing board containing the original measurements may have been preserved and used as a proof (Ka IV 2: ii 18'–28') or mentioned as *Vorlage* (MŠZ 2: v 15–16). In this case, a writing board would have served as a *Vorlage* for the *ammatu* and/or the *kudurru* inscription. However, considering the circumstantial evidence regarding the use of writing boards in Mesopotamia, I believe that we should consider the possibility that the additional step of copying the contents from wax to clay may have been skipped. In that case the writing board, which contained the *ammatu*, would have been sealed.

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