APPENDIX

THE FIND-SPOT OF THE ANTAKYA STELE

It seems appropriate to record what I know personally of the somewhat unusual circumstances of the discovery of the Antakya stele of Adad-nirari III (fig. 1). Veysel Donbaz, the first editor of the inscription, records:

"About 1968, when Selâhattin Asım was the director of the Antakya Museum, [the stele] was found by a peasant digging a new well near the Orontes at an approximate depth of six metres, to the left of the road between Antakya and Samandağ ... The area is a flat open valley covered with trees and orchards. Very shortly after the discovery of the stele Asım was summoned to the find-spot and acquired it for the museum."

This information was provided by myself to Donbaz in a letter dated 30 October 1987. I myself was informed of the existence of the stele by Dominique Collon in a letter dated 10 October 1971. She had seen it in the laboratuar of the museum, where it still was when I saw it in 1974. On that visit I was taken by Selâhattin Asım to see the find-spot between the Antakya-Samandağ road and the river Orontes in the neighbourhood of the village Karaçay. I met and talked to the farmer and was shown the well.

By an extraordinary coincidence, at a reception in the Turkish Embassy in London, in December 1999, I had the pleasure of talking with the then Cultural Attaché, Bay Mithat Rende, and in the course of our conversation it emerged unprompted that he as a child had actually been present and witnessed the discovery. His testimony confirms the factuality of the account beyond doubt.

1. RIMA 3, A.O. 104.2.
Apart from the remarkable chance of hitting the stele at such a depth in the course of the new well construction, how did the stele come to be buried in this way? Had it been a case of clearing an old well, one could suppose that the stele had simply been thrown down it at some date, but the witnesses (the farmer, Asım and Rende) seem agreed that it was a new well. One must thus probably suppose that it fell or was thrown into the river, which over the centuries has moved away leaving it buried in the 6 m of sediment.