

The Inscription on the Reverse of the Šarrat-nip̄i Lion: An Ashurnasipal text from Calah

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The text presented here is from the reverse of the Šarrat-nip̄i lion in the possession of the British Museum. A second lion from the Šarrat-nip̄i temple in Calah is located in Mosul, but information as to whether this second lion bears an inscription on the reverse is not available. At this point, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Christopher Walker for passing on the inscription to Dr A.K. Grayson¹ and for his prompt collation of the text. I also wish to thank Dr Grayson and Dr Gilbert McEwan for their kind assistance in reading the manuscript, and, particularly, Miss W. de Filippi for bringing the text to my attention and assisting in its preparation.

The inscription is 21 lines in length, and bears a long, inverted T-shaped, repaired fissure, which slightly mutilates but does not obliterate several signs. The text also contains a number of errors and omissions, and, in general, the signs and the spacing exhibit the same inconsistencies in representation noted by Paley in his study of the Ashurnasirpal reliefs from Calah.²

The structure of the inscription is similar in some ways to the inscription on the reverse of the Ninurta temple slabs published by W. de Filippi in *Assur*, Volume I.³ It contains:

- i. the king's name and titles, followed by those of his father and grandfather (line 1)
- ii. an abbreviated section describing the king's valour and military might (line 2)
- iii. the king's standard titulary with the passage *ištu reš eni*⁴ *subnat adi māt nīrib ša bētāni* describing the limit of his conquests (lines 3 to 7a)

¹Dr Grayson has kindly relinquished his prior rights to the text. The text is published by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.

²Samuel M. Paley, *King of the World: Ashur-nasir-pal II of Assyria 883-859 B.C.*, The Brooklyn Museum, 1976, p.118.

³W. de Filippi, 'The Royal Inscriptions of Aššur-Nāšir-Apli II (883-859 B.C.): A Study of the Calah Inscriptions Together with an Edition of Two of These Texts', *Assur* I/7 (1977), pp.17ff.

iv. a description of the rebuilding of Calah with some deviations in phraseology from the Ninurta temple inscription⁴ (lines 7b to 9a)

v. a description of the building of the Šarrat-nip̄i, Ninurta, Gula, and Sin temples,⁵ a description of the fashioning of an image of Ishtar, and the construction of a throne dais, and the establishment of cereal offerings.⁶ (lines 9b to 14a).

Unlike the inscription on the reverse of the slabs from the Ninurta temple, the present text contains a curse formula in terms reminiscent of the Ištar Kidmuri inscription (*ARI* 2 c1 19 §691). This is, in fact, the only other inscription of Ashurnasirpal in which the phrase *ina bīt kīli* occurs.

The similarity in phraseology between the present text, on the one hand, and the Ninurta reverse inscription, the 'annals', and the inscription of Ištar Kidmuri, on the other, may be an important consideration for establishing the chronological priority of these texts, but such a study is beyond the scope of the present article. Moreover, the difficulties inherent in such a study would be compounded by the possibility that the similarities may be functional, rather than chronological. For instance, the present inscription, the Ištar Kidmuri inscription, and

⁴The phraseology is the same as that in the Great Monolith and the Wall inscription: 'The ancient city Kalach which Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, a prince who preceded me, had built ...' (Grayson, *ARI* 2, §619). It also adds here in the description of the rebuilding of Calah the phrase used in the Ištar Kidmuri inscription in connection with the renovation of the temple: 'in the wisdom of my heart which Ea, king of the Apsū, in his broad understanding had given to me ...'.

⁵The present inscription differs from the Ninurta reverse inscription published by de Filippi in that it mentions four temples. The same four temples are again mentioned in the description of the building of the Ninurta temple in the 'annals' (Grayson, *ARI* 2 §576).

⁶Ninurta temple slabs reverse refers to the establishment of feast days.

Ninurta temple slab reverse were probably never intended to be seen. The 'annals', on the other hand, since they were engraved on the wall and pavement slabs which decorated the Ninurta temple were doubtless intended for public viewing. One is tempted to view the fluidity of phraseology⁷ in this and the Istar Kidmuri inscription as representing an early phase in the development of the Ashurnasirpal inscriptions, but as Dr Gilbert McEwan has suggested it may be equally viewed as less fixed phraseology characteristic of reverse inscriptions.⁸ At present, it can be placed broadly into the category of inscriptions edited contemporaneous with or subsequent to the Western Campaign(s).⁹

BM 118895 reverse

Transliteration

1. ^mAŠ-ŠUR-ΓPAB-IBILA MAN GAL-ú MAN dan-nu šar₄ ŠÚ šar₄ KUR aš-šur A TUKUL.MAŠ MAN GAL-ú MAN dan-nu šar₄ ŠÚ šar₄ KUR.aš-šur A 10-ÉRIN-TAḪ MAN GAL-ú MAN dan-nu šar₄ ŠÚ šar₄ KUR.aš-šur-ma
2. et-lu qar-du šá ina GIŠ.TUKUL-ti aš-šur EN-šú i-tal-la-ku-ma ina mal-ki.MEŠ šá kib-rat 4-ta šá-nin-šú la Γ-šú-ú MAN šá TA e-bir-ta-an
3. ÍD.IDIGNA a-di KUR.lab-na-na ù A.AB.BA GAL-te KUR.la-qe-e a-na si-ḫir-ti-šá KUR.su-ḫi a-di URU.Γra-Γ-pi-qi a-na GIR.2-šú
4. ú-šik-ni-šú TA SAG e-ni ÍD.su-ub-na-at EN KUR.ni-ir-bé šá be-ta-ni ŠU-su KUR-ud TA-tu ni-ri-be šá KUR.kir-Γru-ri a-di KUR.gil-za-ni
5. ΓTA-Γ-tu e-bir-ta-an ÍD.za-ba KI.TA a-di URU.DU₆-ba-a-ri šá el-la-an KUR.za-ban ΓTA-Γ-tu URU.DU₆-šá-ab-ta-ni a-di URU.DU₆-šá-
6. Γza-Γ-ab-da-ni URU.ḫi-ri-mu ΓURU.ḫa-Γ-ru-tu KUR.bi-ra-a-te ša KUR.kar-Γdu-ni-áš a-na mi-šir KUR-ia ú-Γtir ù DAGAL.MEŠ
7. KUR.KUR na-i-ri a-na paṭ Γgim-ri-šá Γa-Γ-pil URU.kal-ḫu maḫ-ra-a ša ^{md}šul-ma-nu-sag šar₄ KUR.aš-šur NUN a-lik pa-ni-ia e-pu-šú URU šu-ú
8. e-na-aḫ-ma iṣ-lal a-na EGIR UD-me Γa-na DU₆ ù kar-me i-tur ina ḫi-sa-at šá-ia Γša ^dé-a šar₄ ΓAB.ZU GEŠTU DAGAL-ta NÍG.ΓBA ΓURU šu-ú ana eš-šu-te
9. DIB-bat DU₆ <la>-be-ru ú-na-kir a-di UGU A.MEŠ ú-šá-pil 1 ME 20 Γtik-Γ-pi a-na muš-pa-li lu ú-ṭa-bi é ^dMAŠ ^dGAŠAN.[KUR] ^dgu-la ^d30
10. ina qé-reb-šú lu ad-di É.KUR ši-i a-na na-al-ban lu ak-šur šu-bat DINGIR.MEŠ GAL.MEŠ ina šá ú-Γkín É.KUR ši-i a-na na-an-[mar m]al-ki.MEŠ ù NUN.MEŠ
11. šá da-ra-te e-pu-uš ina pi-it GEŠTU.2.MEŠ ḫa-si-si

⁷ In this respect, note particularly line 11 'with regard to the needs of the great gods' and the use of *šūrāhūtu* 'noble' in reference to the cedar beams in line 12.

⁸ Dr McEwan suggested that a study of all the reverse inscriptions of Ashurnasirpal might prove valuable for comparing phraseology.

⁹ W. de Filippi, op. cit., p.46.

ina ḫi-ših¹-ti DINGIR.MEŠ GAL.MEŠ šá ΓÁG-Γ-ni ^dLAMMA-at ^dINANNA NIN-a šá ina pa-an la-a GÁL-[ú] DINGIR-SA GAL-tum lu ú-šar-riḫ

12. ina du-muq NA₄.MEŠ ša-ri¹-ri ù GUŠKIN ḫuš-še-e lu ab-niš «ina» BÁRA-šá a-na da-ra-te [ina] ḫib-bi lu ad-di É.KUR Γšil-i ú-si-im ú-[ša]r-riḫ GIŠ.ÜR.MEŠ
13. GIŠ.e-re-ni Γšit¹-ra-ḫu-ti ina UGU-šá lu ú-kín GIŠ.IG.MEŠ GIŠ.e-re-ni ši-ra-te in KÁ.MEŠ-šá ú-ri-te UR.MAḪ.MEŠ ek-du-[te] šá NA₄.pi-li
14. BABBAR-e e-pu-uš ina KÁ-šá ú-še-ziz e-nu-ma ^dGAŠAN.KUR GAŠAN GAL-tum ina BÁRA-šá KÙ ina É at-ma-ni-šá šá ru-'a-me ú-šá-bu ki-niš lu tap-pár-da-a [GÍD] ΓUD¹.MEŠ-a lu DUG₄.GA
15. šúm-ud MU.MEŠ-a lu ta-tas-qar SANGA-ti lu ta-ram a-na na-dan zi-bi-ia lu taḫ-du e-ma MURUB₄ ù MÈ <ú-ša-ma-ru> šu-um-rat šá-a [lu] Γtu¹-šak-ši-da-ni NUN-ú
16. EGIR-ú ina MAN.MEŠ-ni DUMU.MEŠ-a šá aš-šur MU-šú ana LÚ.SIPA-ut KUR.aš-šur i-na-bu-šú UR.MAḪ.MEŠ šu-a-tu-nu TA KÁ.MEŠ-šá la tu-na-kar M[U.S]AR la-a ta-pa-šit
17. an-ḫu-su-nu ud-diš MU šaṭ-ra ana ḫi-šu GUR aš-šur EN GAL-ú ^dMAŠ u ^dINANNA a-šib É.KUR šú-a-tú ḪÉ.NUN ṭuḫ-du ḪÉ.GÁL ina KUR-šú lu-ki-nu UN.ME[š-šú] šal-tiš DU.DU-ku-ma ina gi-mir KUR.KUR.MEŠ
18. ina MÈ šá MAN.MEŠ-ni KI taq-ru-ub-te am-mar šá-šu ú-šam-šu-šu šá MU.SAR i-pa-ši-ṭu UR.MAḪ.MEŠ šu-a-tu-nu ú-na-ka-ru ina A.[MEŠ] ŠUB-ú ina IZI.MEŠ GÍBIL-ú
19. ina É ki-li¹ la a-ma-ri GAR-nu ù mim-ma INIM NÍG.GIG pa-an É.KUR šú-a-tú ú-šap-ra-ku ^dMAŠ EN me-ḫi ù šá-ga-aš-te ^dINANNA Γbe-Γ-lat MURUB₄ u MÈ MAN-su
20. [lis]-ki-pu GIŠ.AŠ.TI-šú KAR-šú ina IGI LÚ.KUR.MEŠ-šú ka-miš lu-še-ši-bu-šu su-un-qu bu-bu-tu ù ni-ib-ra-ṭu ina KUR-šú [lu]-ki-nu MU-šú
21. NUMUN-šú¹ ina KUR lu ZÁḪ

Translation

1. Ashurnasirpal the great king, the strong king, king of the universe, king of Assyria, the son of Tukulti-Ninurta, the great king, the strong king, king of the universe, king of Assyria, the son of Adad-nerari (who was) also the great king, the strong king, king of the universe, king of Assyria;

2. (Ashurnasirpal), the valiant fighter, who with the support of Ashur his lord marches about and among the kings of the four quarters, has no equal. The king who, from the east

3. Tigris region to the Lebanon mountains and the Great Sea, the whole land of Laqe, the land of Suhi to the city of Rapiqu, at his feet

4. he has cause to bow down. From the source of the Subnat to the interior of the land of Nirib his hand has conquered. From the passes of the land of Kirruri to the land of Gilzani,

5. from the other side of the Lower Zab to Til-bari, which is upstream from Zaban, from Til-sha-Abtani to Til-sha-

6. Zabdani, the cities of Hirimu (and) Harutu, for-

tresses of the land of Karduniash (Babylonia) I added to the territory of my land, and over

7. the totality of the wide Nairi lands I have become master. The ancient city of Kalhu which Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, a prince who preceded me, had built,

8. had fallen into decay and lay deserted (and) later had become a complete ruin. In the wisdom of my heart which Ea king of the Apsu in his broad understanding had given to me, that city

9. I took in hand anew. I cleared the old mound and dug down to water level. I excavated to a depth of 120 layers of brick, and a temple of Ninurta, Šarrat-nip̄hi, Gula, and Sin

10. I founded therein. I completed that temple and established (it) as a dwelling for the great gods. That temple for the viewing of the eternal kings and princes

11. I built. In my wisdom and understanding, (and) with regard for the needs of the great gods who loved me, a statue of Ishtar my lady as had never existed before (for) her great divinity I indeed made splendid.

12. Of the choicest stone, fine gold, and red gold I made it. Her throne dais I set up therein forever. That temple I made suitably splendid, ... beams

13. of cedar I erected therein, (and) tall doors of cedar I set in its gates. Fierce lions of white limestone

14. I made (and) I set (them) up in its gates. When Šarrat-nip̄hi the great lady sits on her pure throne in her alluring dwelling, may she be steadfastly radiant, may she command my days to be long

15. (and) my years numerous. May she love my priesthood. May she be pleased at the giving of my cereal-offerings (and) may she let me attain the desire of my heart anywhere I strive in battle or conflict.

16. O future prince among the kings my sons whom Ashur may appoint to the shepherdship of Assyria: Do not remove these lions from their gates or delete my name inscribed (on them), (but rather)

17. repair their dilapidation (and) restore my inscribed name to its place. (Then) may Ashur, the great lord, Ninurta, and Ishtar who dwells in this temple establish fullness, abundance, and plenty in his land. May his subjects walk about in a lordly manner and in all lands

18. in the war of kings upon the battlefield may they make him obtain his heart's desire; (but) whoever deletes my inscribed name, (or) moves these lions, (or) throws (them) into the water, (or) burns them with fire,

19. (or) places (them) in a prison, hidden away, or inflicts any sacrilege whatever on this temple, may Ninurta, the lord of storm and destruction, and Ishtar the lady of war and battle overthrow his kingship,

20. take away his throne, make him sit before his enemies like a captive, establish want, famine, and hunger in his land, (and) make his name and his seed disappear from the land.

Commentary

7. According to C.B.F. Walker's collation, *e-pu* (erasure)-*šú*.

11. The syntax of this line is inelegant. I have translated *ina ħi-ših-ti* DINGIR.MEŠ GAL.MEŠ as 'with regard for the needs of the great gods', since some such translation as this seems to be required in the context, but *ina muħħi* or *ana* would have been preferred. The phrase 'her great divinity I indeed made splendid' disrupts the flow of the line, and deviates from the standard phraseology. Compare Grayson, *ARI 2 c1 1* §576 from the Ninurta temple inscription 'annals', 'At that time I created with my cunning that statue of the god Ninurta which had not existed previously as an icon of his great divinity out of the best stone of the mountain and red gold', and W. de Filippi, *Assur I/7*, p.20-21 Nin. rev., lines 13-14, *ibid.* The phraseology is closer, perhaps, to the description of temple building in the Banquet Stela, 'I made (the images of) their great divinity resplendent with red gold and sparkling stones' (Grayson, *ARI 2 c1 17* §679), but here the problem is resolved by not mentioning the non-pre-existence of the images, and by substituting *lu ú-šar-riħ* for *lu ab-niš* as the verb at the end of the phrase.

13. In the description of the cedar beams one expects *še/ši-ħu-te* 'long', not *šit-ra-ħu-te*, which according to von Soden, *AHW* p.1252a means 'noble, fine, proud', and is normally applied to gods and kings.

19. The sign that I have emended to *li* is unclear. C.B.F. Walker suggests *il* (?).