THE INSCRIPTION OF JIBBIT-LĪM, KING OF EBLA

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HELSINKI 1984
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1. Introductory remarks

In 1970, Paolo Matthiae and Giovanni Pettinato made known the discovery of the statue and inscription of Jibbit-Lîm, king of Ebla, at Tell Mardikh in north Syria, which for the first time raised the possibility, now a reality, that the modern site of Tell Mardikh hides the ruins of the ancient city of Ebla.


The circumstances of the discovery of the statue were described by Matthiae, MAIS 1967/1968 pp. 1-2, in the following way, as cited in Pettinato, Archives pp. 23f.:

"The opening up of the sector called G, in the southwest area of the Acropolis was undertaken to obtain some indications concerning the topography of the presumed approach to the Acropolis itself. Though this digging deduced only negative elements for an urban interpretation of the organization of the southwest slope of the citadel which hypothetically gave
shape to the Acropolis, it led, however, to an unusually important discovery for the history of the city. The exploration of the limited area of the upper slope of the Acropolis called sector C did in fact bring to light the torso of a statue in basalt, TM.68.C.61. Its chief interest lies in the relatively well-preserved Akkadian cuneiform inscription on the upper part of the bust. In its present condition the torso measures 0.54 meters in height on the left side of the body which is more extensively preserved. At the height of the shoulders, which preserve their original dimensions, the statue is 0.47 meters wide. It is 0.21 meters thick at shoulder height corresponding to the beard while in the lower part of the fragment at the level of the break its thickness measures 0.23 meters."

This is how Pettinato, Archives p. 24, describes the inscription:

"The 26-line cuneiform inscription was added crosswise to the normal erect position of the statue. It begins on the figure back at the height of the spine, continues on the left shoulder and goes on to the chest as far as chin level to finish, after an empty space, on the right shoulder. The text was written on one column in a rectangular space well demarcated on its four sides. The scribe took constant care always to fill the space at his disposal between the outer edges of the rectangular column, sometimes elongating the signs in an exaggerated manner, and was careful not to transgress the right edge of the column."

Contrary to the Pettinato description and the drawing of the inscription, parts of the outside frame enclosing the inscription and many dividing lines within the frame are not recognizable on the available photographs.

The top frame is preserved fully and the bottom frame, below line 28, partially. That the bottom line is a part of the frame and not a dividing line is assured by the fact that, to all appearances, lines 18-28 are not separated by dividing lines. On the left side, only the frame before lines 1-8 is clearly visible. The right frame is visible at the end of lines 1-19, but, contrary to Pettinato's copy, there is a long blank space between the existing signs and the right frame in lines 13-19. The right frame is destroyed at the end of lines 20-28.

The horizontal dividing lines of the inscription are recognizable only in lines 1-17. Nothing is visible in lines 18-26, and, contrary to the copy, the scribe failed to use dividing lines in the last part of the inscription. Apparently, the scribe, unaware of the length of the text, first drew the dividing lines 1-17 then filled them out with writing and continued to the end without bothering to add the rest of the dividing lines.

Lines 1-19 of the inscription are fully preserved, except for $d[u-\text{BAR}]$ in the middle of line 1 and $\z{\text{3-}k[u-\text{un}]}$ at the end of line 18. While the beginnings of lines 20-26 are not visible on the photo, probably nothing is missing, except for line 23. The ends of lines 20-26 are broken away; the broken parts
may have contained either one or two elongated signs or full words. Pettinato, *AAAS* XX p. 76, dated the inscription to "la fin de la troisième dynastie de Ur, vers l'an 2000 av. J. C."; he writes as follows in *Archives* p. 24: "Since the statue ... was not found in situ, its dating can only be approximate. While not categorically excluding an earlier date, Matthiae [MAIS 1967/1968 p. 16], for historical-artistic reasons, tends to favor a date between 2000 and 1900 B.C."

The exact dating of the inscription, naturally, hinges on its writing and language. On both levels, we can immediately eliminate the two extremes, the Pre-Sargonic and Sargonic periods at one end, and classical Old Babylonian at the other. What remains is the Ur III and post-Ur III periods from which we have ample documentation not at Ebla but at Mari. It consists, in the first place, of the bulk of the votive inscriptions of the kings, governor-generals, and related personnel discovered at Mari and dated from Būr-Sîn to the first years of Ibbî-Sîn at the end of the Third Dynasty of Ur, and, in the second place, of the references to the individuals of Mari who are named in the Sumerian administrative texts of Babylonia. The post-Ur III documentation at Mari, which lasted about two hundred years from the time of Ibbî-Sîn at the end of the Ur III period to the rise of the Lîm Dynasty in the classical OB period, consists of a few votive inscriptions, dozens of liver omens, and hundreds of administrative texts. The details concerning the writing and language of Mari in the Ur III period and post-Ur III times are collected and described in my forthcoming article "Mari and the Kish Civilization", those in the inscription of Jibbiț-Lîm, below section 5. The twenty-six line inscription is too brief to allow us to date it exactly. Nevertheless, two points stand out clearly. While the forms of the signs and their usage are certainly not of the classical OB period, they appear to be closer to the Old Babylonian than the Ur III period; the individual signs are not grouped together in cases containing one to three signs as in the Ur III period, but follow each other in horizontal lines containing up to about ten signs as from post-Ur III times on. Accordingly, the Jibbiț-Lîm inscription is to be dated to the end of the dark period between the time of Ibbî-Sîn of Ur and the Lîm Dynasty at Mari.

Despite its brevity, the votive inscription of Jibbiț-Lîm contributes immeasurably to our knowledge of the latest phases of the language of Ebla. Among its many distinctive features discussed below, the following are among the most noteworthy: The preservation of aw, not ȗ; the feminine verbal pre-
fix ta-, not ji-; the subjunctive –n, not –u; and the verb+object, not object +verb, syntax.

2. Transliteration and translation

1) a-na d[EŠ₄⁺DAR] ṭapʾ-la-am
2) I-bi-ʾit-Lé-im
3) DUMU ig-ri-ʾī-LI.1B LUGAL
4) me-ki-ʾim Ṭb-la-ʾi-ʾim
5) ʿū-si-ʾi-ʾib
6) MU 8 ša d[EŠ₄⁺DAR]
7) ta-ʾu-ʾi-ʾa ʾna Ṭb-la
8) ma-ša-su-ʾim
9) I-bi-ʾit-Li-ʾim
10) šu-un-šu ʾa-na Ṭb-la-ti-ʾšu
11) ṣu ba-la-ʾat
12) me-ir-e-šu (išṭur?)
13) d[EŠ₄⁺DAR] (ʾa)
14) ta-ʾar-ṭa-ša-ʾma
15) ma-ša-su-ʾu
16) IG₁ d[EŠ₄⁺DAR]
17) bi-ʾel-ti-ʾšu
18) ʿū-ša-xi-ʾiš ūš-[u-ʾa-n]
19) šu-un-šu
20) ša ma-ša-xi-[im ūš-un-šu ū]
21) šu-me-šu-[u ma ša]
22) me-ʾir-e-šu ša ipašši-ṭa?] [hi] sons (children) [whoever erases?],
23) d[EŠ₄⁺DAR] Lu taʾmaršu? [may] ES[tor] curse him?]
24) ʿu-šu-[ma]
25) šu-un-[šu]
26) ša ʾ-ša-ʾa-va liḥliq?

3. Philological commentary

Lines 1, 6, 13, 16, and 23: d[EŠ₄⁺DAR]. — The ossified transliteration d[EŠ₄⁺DAR] is written with d, the semantic indicator for divine names, plus the "Winkelhaken", usually transliterated as U, plus the sign DAR. Ultimately, it goes back to a syllabic spelling written as an oblique, vertical, or horizontal
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degree, to be read aš or eš₄ plus dar. The choice between aš or eš₄ depends on
the period when the vowel a became e in the proximity of the phoneme c. In our
case, the reading dEš₄.DAR is preferred because of the occurrence of ušēriba,
written u-ši-ri-il in line 5, in place of juša₂šērib, written u-ša-ri-il in the
Sargonic period (MAD III p. 61). The semantic indicator d began to be used
when the syllabic spellings aš-dar and Eš₄-dar died out and were replaced by
the semi-logographic writing dEš₄.DAR. The feminine gender of Eštar is indi-
cated by the congruence of Eštar with tawpi₄ in line 7 (see below) and tar-
tēšēma in line 14 (see below), both with the feminine prefix ta-

Line 1: ap-ša-an. — The noun ṣapēm in accusative, contracted from *apēm, is
a loanword from the Sumerian abšu. The meaning of the Sumerian abšu and
Akkadian ṣarēm, originally "underground water" and "sea", is "water basin"
when applied to objects dedicated to the temple. Pettinato, MAAS XX p. 75,
refers to several basins excavated at Tell Mardikh and reported in Matthiae,

Lines 2, 3, and 9: I-bi-ʾāt-li-im son of Ig-ri-il-JI.IB. — Each name is com-
posed of two elements, the first of which expresses a verbal form, the second
a divine name. The only parallels to I-bi-ʾāt-li im known to me are I-bi-ʾāt-
īn-ra (Legrain, TRU 67:3) in the Ur III period, listed under 'BT? in MAD III
p. 15, and I-en-bi-ʾāt-dTišpak (ICS XXIV p. 49 no. 15:3, from Tell Harmal) and
Ib-bi-ʾāt-duti (TIN IV 46:3) in Old Babylonian. Because of the spelling with
nb and bb in the two names, I-en-bi-ʾāt-dTišpak and Ib-bi-ʾāt-duti cannot be
derived from Akkadian abātum I "to destroy" or abātum II "to run away", "to
flee" which occurs as iʾbut, iʾabbat in the B stem, but from nabātum "to be-
come bright", "to shine brightly", with *ibbut, inabbut in the B stem and
Ittanbiš, Ittanबिš (and Ittanबिš) in the BTN stem. Furthermore, the oc-
currence of the fire god Era in the name I-bi-ʾāt-īn-ra and of the sun god
Samaš in the name Ib-bi-ʾāt-duti makes the derivation of the verbal form from
nabātum "to become bright", "to shine brightly" more plausible than from abā-
tum I or II. As indicated by the prefix je-, from ja-, and the preservation of
nb (not bb), the name I-en-bi-ʾāt-dTišpak is Amorite. See Gelb, et al., CAAA
p. 332. The preterit ibbiš is in disagreement with *ibbut, inabbut in Akkadian.
The two forms are two dialectically distinguished patterns in the same way
that Eblaic jiguš is different from Old Akkadian jiguš (see just below) or
standard Akkadian igamul, igammil is different from Old Akkadian igamul, igammal
(MAD III p. 118).

Li-im of the name I-bi-ʾāt-li-im is the dynastic god of Mari in the Old Baby-
lonian period; he occurs also at Ebla in the Pre-Sargonic period.
The best parallel to our *Ig-ri-ta-HI.1B* is *Ig-ri-ta*, *Ig-ri-ta-Da-mu*, *Ig-ri-ta-qa-lam* at Ebla (Pettinato, MEE I p. 270). Its verbal derivates are attested in the lexical texts of Ebla, where we find *gú-ra-su-wa = SAG.DU₂* and *gú-ri-su = SAG.DU₂*. The meaning of the Eblaic nouns may be established on the basis of *SAG.DU₂.DU₂ = šaš-bi-šu, mar-tap-pi-di* "roving (demon)" in Akkadian. For a discussion of the Ebla entries, cf. Fronzaroli, SE I p. 7, who translates *garāšum* as "seccare". Preterit *jīgruš* occurs twice in Old Akkadian, both times in disturbed context. The first of these occurrences reads *ig-ru-sa-am* (MAD I 172), the second *[a]-ti la dag-ru-jas-ša*-am "[as long as] you have not .... to me" (RA XXIII 25:14), which Thureau-Dangin, loc. cit., translated as "tant que tu ne n'aures pas parlé", comparing Arabic *jarasa* "rendre un (faible) son", "parler (à voix basse)". In MAD III p. 120, I compared Old Akkadian *jīgruš* with *ig-ru-ūš*, parallel to *ig-ru-ab* "he has come near", "he approached" in a poetic text of later date (RA VII p. 18:8). The word is not attested elsewhere in Akkadian. The pattern *jīgruš* of Old Akkadian corresponds to the pattern *jīgriš* of Pre-Sargonic and post-Ur III Ebla. (See just above.) The verb *GRŠ* and its derivates are attested in Ugaritic, Hebrew, and Syriac, but not in Amorite. In all cases *GRŠ* denotes a verb of movement.

The second element in the name *Ig-ri-ta-HI.1B* resembles nothing Semitic. If read and copied correctly, it may correspond to the divine name *Hip(a)* (or *Hepa*) as taken by Pettinato in his transliteration *He-epu* (IB). In the form *He-ipa* or *He/ipatu* the divine name is widely scattered throughout Anatolia and Syria as far as Palestine.

In resuming the evaluation of the two royal names, we find that while the verb *nabāšum* of *I-bi-it-Lī-im* is at home in Akkadian, its pattern *jibbiš*, attested in an Amorite name, is in disagreement with the Akkadian pattern *ēbbušt*. While the verb *garāšum* of *Ig-ri-ta-HI.1B* occurs in two Old Akkadian "poetic" texts, it is not productive in Akkadian onomastics and its pattern *jīgriš*, known at Pre-Sargonic Ebla, is in disagreement with the pattern *jīgruš* of Old Akkadian. Of the two divine names, *Lī-im* is the dynastic god of Mari in the Old Babylonian period although it is also found in Ebla onomastics of the Pre-Sargonic period, and *HI.1B*, if read correctly, is known as a Syro-Anatolian god in later periods. All in all it may be concluded that the names *Jibbišt-Līm* and *Jīgriš-Hip(a)* belong to Mari-Ebla, but not Akkadian, onomastics.

Line 4: *me-ki-im Ibl-La-š-im* "who raises (lifts up the spirits of) the Ebleans".

— This line was translated by Pettinato, AAAS XX p. 75, as "de la 'lignée'"
éblaïte" ("of Eblaite stock" in his *Archives* p. 25) and interpreted as follows: "La traduction 'lignée' pour mēqi'n [sic] est ad sensum, car elle a été tirée du context. Toutefois, le terme n'est pas très claire du point de vue lexical." To me, me-qi-im is a construct state with a noun in genitive *Ib-la-ì-im* /Ebla-ìjm/. The form me-qi-im is to be interpreted as mēqi'n, a participle hifil from *mu+ha+qi'm* of the verbs mediae infirmae. In form, it corresponds exactly to mēqi'nun, Mēqi'nun of Amorite and mēqi'n of Hebrew. The situation at Ebla is controversial. While š (and ŠT) forms are occasionally attested, mostly in lexical texts (Gelb, EKC p. 40), nothing stands in the way of assuming that both šafel and hifil were used at Ebla, as they were, for instance, in Ugaritic.

The form *Ib-la-ì-im* in line 4 is a gentilic formation of *Ib-la* in line 7. At Ebla-Mari, there is -tium from the Pre-Sargonic to post-Ur III periods, while -a'um begins in the OB period. Cf., e.g., Karkamishium (ARMT XIX 299, post-Ur III) and Karkamishaju (ARMT XII 747, OB), both at Mari. The -a'um suffix is characteristic of the Assyrian dialect, as in *Ibla(j)ītu*, *Aššur(a)jītu*, contrasted with -tium of the Old Akkadian and Babylonian dialects, as in *Akkadijam*, *Iblītum*. The use of the singular "Eblaite", rather than the plural "Eblaïtes", occurs in Marišum, *šarru/išum* of the Old Akkadian inscriptions of Sargon (Hirsch, *AF* XX pp. 38 and 49). The semantic indicator KI is omitted in both *Ib-la-ì-im* and *Ib-la* as it frequently is in geographical names written syllabically, not logographically, in Old Akkadian (NAID II 2 p. 23) and occasionally at post-Ur III Mari (Limet, *ARMT* XIX pp. 159-163).

Line 5: ū-ši-ri-ìb "he made enter (brought)". — See the commentary to line 1.

Line 6: MU 8 "(in) the eighth year". — Pettinato, *AAAS* XX pp. 74f., translates MU 8 as "dans la huitième année (de Estar, depuis que [...]"
and takes it to be "une formule de datation" or "datation de l'événement" (pp. 73f. and 76). Subsequently, Pettinato changed his interpretation in his *Ebla* p. 23 and *Archives* pp. 24f. and p. 29 n. 35, and read MU 8 as mu.sâ.sâ (that is, MU.ZA. ZA), and, following a suggestion of E. Sollberger, translated it as "he to whom the goddess Estar has given the name". Lambert reads the signs as MU 8 and translates it "eight years".

Lines 6-7: ša dEš₂₄.DAR ta-ù-bi-a ṭ-na *Ib-la* "when/after Estar manifested herself in Ebla". — Pettinato, *AAAS* XX pp. 74f., links ša dEš₂₄.DAR with the preceding MU 8 (see just above) and continues with ša? ū-pi-a ṭ-na Eš₂₄, translating it "depuis que? elle 'resplendit' en Ebla". For reasons unclear to me, Pettinato, *Ebla* p. 23, translates this sentence "che a preso possesso in Ebla"
and in his *Archives* pp. 25 and 27 translates it "who has taken possession in Ebla". Lambert corrects the reading of ša ʾ-pi-a to ta-ʾ-pi-a, translating it "after? Istar appeared/revealed herself (in Ebla)". Of the two interpretations, the second is preferred because it is in agreement with the congruence of Eš-tar tartāšuna in line 14, where the feminine prefix ta- goes with the feminine divine name Eš-tar. Nevertheless, Lambert's interpretation involves the reading of TA in place of ŠA, which requires justification. While a clear sign TA appears twice in line 14 and a clear sign ŠA is attested three times in lines 6, 18, and 26, the questionable sign, as copied in line 7, has a form that lies somewhere in between TA and ŠA. Because of the uncertainties, we may be justified in considering other interpretations besides those offered by Pettinato and Lambert, for instance: (in the eighth year) ša ēš₄, dar ša ʾ-bi-a "of Eš-tar of Ub/pija" or ša ēš₄, dar ša-ʾ-bi-a "of Eš-tar of ša Ub/pija" or ša ēš₄, dar ta-ʾ-bi-a "of Eš-tar of Ta Ub/pija". None of these possibilities is persuasive. The geographical names ʾ-bi-a, ša-ʾ-bi-a, or Ta-ʾ-bi-a are either unattested, or are attested outside of the area of Ebla or north Syria generally, and Eš-tar of any of these locations is unknown anywhere. In coming back to Lambert's interpretation, we find, first of all, that it is strengthened by the numerous occurrences of Eš-tar revealing/manifesting herself in Akkadian literature, as, for instance, in "for whom Eš-tar revealed herself at the rising of her light" (TCL VI 1 rev. 1, later Akkadian, cited by Joan Goodnick Westenholz, JNES XLIII p. 79a). Furthermore, the form ta-ʾ-bi-a /tawpiːa/ fully conforms with the semantic, phonological, morphological, and syntactical features that had been known previously. As shown by the spelling ta-ʾ-bi-a, the consonantal root of /tawpiːa/ is /aw/ with an initial strong /w/. The spelling Ca-ʾ as well as the spellings Ca-aw(P1) and Ca-a all stand for Caw, as in the following examples, all culled from Amorite (Gelb & al., CAAA pp. 100ff.): ḫa-ʾ-hi- /Jawḥi/ or /Jawḥi/, third person preterit, root unknown; ḫa-ʾ-da- /Awda/, first person present-future of the basic stem, or /Hawda/, third person perfect, as in Hebrew ḫod "to confess", "to give thanks"; ḫa-aw-ṣa- /Jawma/, third person present-future of the basic stem, contrasted with ḫ-ma, ḫ-ma /'uma/ "I swear" in Old Akkadian (MAD III p. 43); ḫa-aw-ṣa- /Jawpa/, third person present-future of the basic stem, contrasted with ḫ-bi- /Jupiː/ "he manifested himself" in Old Akkadian (MAD III p. 55); ḫa-ʾ-ʾi-, ḫa-ʾ-ʾi-, ḫa-aw-ʾi- /Jawši/, third person preterit of the basic stem, contrasted with ḫ-ʾi- /Jūši/ "he went out" in Old Akkadian (MAD III p. 70). A similar case of aw is known from the writing of Aw-na-ʾi- [in] /Awūnānim/ at Pre-Sargonic Mari (Parrot & al., *MAM* III p. 309), and Old Babylonian Aw-na-na-im and, with $w > m$
change, Am-na-nu-un. As is well known, the diphthongs ow and øj do not exist in Akkadian; for example, *ja-nunum becomes jënum, jëmon "day", our ta-spi'ã becomes tûpã, and *baytum becomes bitum "house". The preservation of ow in tas-pi'ã of our inscription is non-Akkadian. It could possibly be Amorite or, more plausibly, local Ebla.

The feminine prefix ta- of tas-pi'ã and of tartazzuma in line 14 is in congruence with the feminine gender of d ES²IQ. This feature is common Semitic, including Pre-Sargonic Ebla, Pre-Sargonic, Ur III, and post-Ur III Mari, Old Akkad, and the Assyrian dialect; the prefix is ë- in the Babylonian dialect from Old Babylonian times on.

Both Pettinato in his reading ša? ë-pî-ä and Lambert in his reading ta-û-pî-ä have recognized that the suffix -a functions as a subjunctive, in place of the suffix -e of standard Akkadian. Lambert refers to "the subjunctive ending -ä which Gelb notes in Old Akkadian tablets probably from the Diyala region (MAD II² 170f.)". The occurrence of the subjunctive -ä in an area as far west as Ebla is one of the most surprising features of the Jibbi-Lîm inscription.

First discovered in the Old Akkadian texts from Išnum (Tell Asmar) in the Diyala River region, as in AB+AS 1(PI) 6k PN₁ a-na PN₂ i-ti-na "witnesses (to the fact) that PN₁ gave 1 PI of barley to PN₂" (Gelb, FM 2:7-10), traces of it have been detected also in the post-Ur III liver omina of Mari, as in ša ... il-ga-ë(É) or ša ... ii-ga-a "which he has taken" (RA XXXV p. 42 no. 3 and p. 43 no. 9). The full evidence in favor of the subjunctive -ä in the Diyala River region and Mari has been collected and discussed in Gelb, FM p. 190.

Morphology of Akkadian (mimeographed) pp. 6 and 10f.; MAD II² pp. 170f.; and Sequential Reconstruction of Proto-Akkadian pp. 103ff. The new evidence provided by tas-pi'ã of the Jibbi-Lîm inscription of Ebla, added to that known primarily from the texts at Išnum and Mari, links together three sites within the broad span of the Kish Civilization. Especially important is the link between Mari and Ebla in post-Ur III times. Survivals of the subjunctive -ä are found in Arabic and possibly in Ugaritic.

Lines 8, 15, and 20: ma-na-su-un, ma-na-su-û, and ma-na-ni-[û]. — The writings ma-na-su-un and ma-na-su-û are nominatives in form but anticipated accusatives in syntax since they are objects of actions expressed by the verbs (ištûr) "he wrote" in line 12 and ištûtur "he set up" in line 18. Abnormal spellings such as ma-na-su-û, in place of the correct ma-na-su-un are known to me from Old Babylonian lexical texts, such as qû-ša-nu-u "child", da-û-û-me-û "lance", or ZU-HH-NU-û-û "to adorn".

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The noun mazzûn of our text appears rarely as mazzûn, mainly as mazzûn in Akkadian, exemplifying a case of \( ss > ns \) dissimilation. Its meaning is recorded as "emplacement", "stand", "socle (of a stela)", etc. in CAD M I pp. 234ff., and as "Socle v Bildern usw." in von Soden, *Allo*. p. 639a. With an eye on the fact that the inscription of Jibbišt-Lîm is written on a statue, both Pettinato and Lambert translated mazzûn not as a stand, but a statue. The reason why the stand for a statue is stressed in the ex-voto offering of Jibbišt-Lîm, rather than his statue, is unclear. For additional discussion of mazzûn, see below in section 4.

Lines 10, 19, 21, and 25: šu-wa-šu, šu-um-šu, šu-na-šu-[nu], and šu-um-šu. — As copied, the reading šu-me-šu-[nu] in line 21 is rather difficult and so is the form šumûnu, instead of the expected šumûnu, in the plural. Nothing but a collation of the text will settle the correct reading. Pettinato, *AAAS* XX p. 75 and *Archives* p. 25, linked šu-wa-šu in line 10 with I-bi-št-Lîm and translated them "le susdit Ibbib-Lîm" and "the above-mentioned I.", respectively. Lines 19f. and 25f. were translated by him on p. 74, with an interpretation on p. 76, as "le nom de la statue" and "le nom de Ibbib-Lîm", respectively. Landsberger, "Die Inschrift des assyrischen Königs Irišum ....", Türk Tarik Harevim Belleten XLV (1950) pp. 248-50, devoted an extensive discussion to the meanings of šumû and the like, which he interpreted as: In der Bedeutung eines unbestimmten Artikels: gemein-akkadisch nur mima šumû = "was auch immer"; "irgendein", "ein" im Sinne von englisch any; "irgendwelches"; "naming"; and "ein unbestimmter Artikel".

The exact meanings of šumû and the like in our inscription are not uniform. The most natural way of translating mazzûn Jibbišt-Lîm šumû in line 8-10 is "the stand, 'Jibbišt-Lîm' is its name" or "the stand by the name of 'Jibbišt-Lîm'". This interpretation is impossible because it does not accord with the known forms of the names of the ex-voto objects as practiced in the Sumerian and Akkadian votive inscriptions; see my article "The Names of Ex-Voto Objects in Ancient Mesopotamia", Names IV (1956) pp. 65-69. According to the evidence cited there and many other examples, collected but not cited, votive objects are named in the form of phrases, sentences, or single nouns plus several attributes, but not of personal names. The occurrence of the word for "name" in reference to persons in lines 20 and 25 is standard in the curse formulas of the votive inscriptions.

Lines 12 and 22: me-ër-e-šû and me-ër-e-[šû]. — The convention of writing syllabically mer'um when it is followed by pronominal suffixes, but logograph-
ically, DUMU, when it occurs in a genealogical structure, such as PN DUMU PN₂, as in lines 2f., is Old Assyrian. So is the form mar’um as contrasted with the dialectal Old Babylonian mar’tum, later nārum. In line with the Old Assyrian spellings of me-ir-e-šu /mer’išu/ in genitive singular, but me-ir-e-šu /mer’ešu/ in genitive plural, our spelling me-ir-e-šu must be taken as a plural "sons", "children", "descendants".

Line 12: (ištn). — Pettinato, AAAS XX p. 75 and Archives p. 25, reconstructed (š-pu-uš) "he fit sculptor" and "he sculpted" after ma-ir-e-šu. It may be of some interest to note that the Irišum inscription (cited above in the note to line 10) uses a sequence of the verbs epa, aškun, and ušāzis, of which ušāzis and iškun also recur in our inscription.

Lines 13f.: dēns DAR ta-ar-ta-šu-ma "Estar loved him/it and". — Both Pettinato and Lambert interpret the form as BT of ra’ānum "to love". The phonetic development of mē > šē in tartān-šuma > tartāšuma is attested at Pre-Sargonic Ebla and in Old Assyrian. The love of gods for humans is expressed in column i 10-12 of the Nāram-Sin inscription from Bassitki published by Abdul-Hadi Al-Fouadi, Samar XXXII (1976) pp. 63-75 (cf. Walter Farber, Or. NS LI (1983) pp. 67 72): in ra-šu-ti dēns dar-a-mu-šu "by the grace (love) of Innin who loved him".

Line 17: bi-el-ti-šu "his lady" (gen.). — Note the spelling bi-el-ti-šu and not be-el-ti-šu, and the late form bālμuμ and not the early form bālμum known in the Sargonic and Ur III periods (HAD III p. 90).

Line 18: ū-ša-zi-ia ūš-k[u-um] "he set up and established (the stand)". — Pettinato read ū-ša-zi-ia ūš-k[u?].... in line 18, translating it "il érigéa ...." and linked ūš-k[u-um] of line 19 with ūš ma-za-zi-[im] of line 20, translating it as "le nom de la statue"; Lambert restored Pettinato’s ūš-k[u?].... as ūš-k[u-um] and linked it with ūš-k[u-um] in line 19, rather than with ūš-za-zi-ia in line 18. Although both interpretations appear, on the surface, equally possible, there may be some justification for favoring the first one. First, there is no good reason to read the signs in lines 18-19 in the order 18 ūš-a-zi-ia 19 ūš-k[u-um], rather than 18 ūš-a-zi-ia 19 ūš-k[u-um] 19 ūš-k[u-um] (ūš ma-za-zi-[im]). The resulting hendiadys, ušāzis iškun "he set up (and) established (the stand)" is well known in Akkadian, as in ajanum aḫpur "I hastened and sent", "I sent quickly" or niḥarrapt nībaq Hil "we shall hurry (and) give drink", "we shall give drink early". Second, in the suggested sequence of lines 19-22, the name of the stand, the names of Jibbit-Lîm and of his children are identical with that proposed above for line 8-12 of the inscription.
Lines 19-26: Curse formula. — Pettinato, AAAS XX p. 75, and, similarly, Archives p. 25, translated lines 19-20 as "le nom de la statue (est):" and took the rest of the text to be the wording of the name of the statue. Lambert RA LXXV p. 96, interpreted lines 20-21 as the beginning of a curse formula: ša ma-a-a-st [u] šu-mi x x [...] "whoever (destroys) my statue and my name [...]" and left the rest unexplained. Lambert’s assumption to begin the curse formula with line 20, rather than line 19, relies not so much on the context as the alleged division of the inscription into a right-hand panel (lines 1-19) and a left-hand panel (lines 20-26), for which there is no justification. My reconstruction of the verbs at the end of lines 22, 23, and 26 is based on the structure of curse formulas in general and is open to revision. Below line 26 there are traces of a horizontal line that forms the bottom frame of the inscription. It is clearly visible in the photo and was taken by Pettinato as indicating that line 26 is the final line of the text.

4. The structure of the inscription

A free translation of the inscription is:

Part 1, lines 1-7: "Jibbiš-Lîm son of Jigriš-ḪI.ŠUB, the king, who raises the spirits of the Ebleans, dedicated the water basin for Eštâr in the eighth year after Eštâr had manifested herself in Ebla."

Part 2, lines 8-18: "Jibbiš-Lîm wrote the name of the stand for his life and the life of his children. Eštâr showed him love and (in gratitude) he erected the stand before Eštâr, his lady."

Part 3, lines 19-26: "May Eštâr [curse him] who [erasers] the name of the stand, [his name, and] the names of [his] children. Or, whoever will write his own name (in their place) [shall perish]."

The division of the inscription into three parts is self-evident. The first part contains the statement about the construction of a water basin and its dedication to Eštâr; the second part deals with the erection of a stand also for Eštâr; the third and final part contains the standard curse formula against the violator of the inscription.

There are no grave problems with the understanding of the first part and the only moot question relates to the manifestation of Eštâr in Ebla, described in lines 6-7, which may be taken either as the conclusion of the first part or the beginning of the second. By contrast, part two bristles with difficulties: In lines 8-10, the sequence ma-zaziššu Jibbiš-Lîm šumû cannot mean "the stand, 'Jibbiš-Lîm' is its name", but "the name of the stand Jibbiš-Lîm ((wrote))";
in lines 13-14, we meet with a rare occurrence of Ěstar tartāšum "Ěstar loved him and"; in line 15, we have an unusual spelling ma-sa-su-š which along with massāšum of line 8 apparently are nominatives in form, but accusatives in meaning; in line 18, the sequence ȗkārāš isāšum "he set up (and) established (the stand)" may provide, if correctly interpreted, a good example of hendiadya. It is probably with reference to these problems that Lambert, RA LXXV p. 95, concluded "that due to the lack of comparable texts and its own peculiar features, [the inscription] is very difficult". The curse formulas in part three contain several lacunae and their reconstruction is open to several possibilities.

In its tripartite division, our votive inscription resembles the standard structure of the votive inscriptions of all times, which normally consist of three parts: 1) the inu (inumt, in ūmμ, inûm) "when" clause, which deals with the occasion, such as the winning of a battle or war, for the action described in 2) the inûmšu (in ūmuš) "then" clause, such as the offering of an ex-voto object or the building of a temple, and 3) the curse formulas against the violator or, rarely, blessings for the benefactor of the ex-voto object or temple. Occasionally, either inu or inûmšu is missing, very rarely both, but, in all cases, the theme of the inu-inûmšu clauses is retained.

Our votive inscription has neither inu nor inûmšu and, what is even more important, the occasion described in the first part does not concern a historical event, such as the winning of a battle or a war. To an unprejudiced eye, the construction of a water basin, described in the first part, and the erection of a stand, described in the second part, look like two parallel actions.

This forces us to deviate from the standard structure of the votive inscriptions and to suggest the following interpretation for our inscription. After Jibbiț-Lîm made the water basin in the eighth year of Ěstar's manifestation in Ebla, then he erected the stand for Ěstar. This brings us to the question of what is the relation between āpāšum "water basin" and massāšum "stand"? Is massāšum a stand for a statue, as generally assumed, or could it be a stand for a water basin? Finally, we can ask whether the "statue" of Jibbiț-Lîm was originally a free-standing piece of sculpture designed to be set on a "stand", or whether it might have formed part of a stand for a water basin. Since the "statue" is badly broken, its original shape and function are thereby obscured and these questions arise primarily from philological considerations.

Contrasting with the tripartite division of the inscription, described above, Pettinato, Archives p. 25, divides the inscription into two unequal parts:
A) the offering of a basin for ritual ablutions to Eštar (lines 1-5) and B) the dedication of a statue of the king to Eštar, concluding with the name given to the statue by the king (lines 6-26).

5. Writing and language of the inscription

The following features may be noted in the writing:

Double consonants are not expressed in the writing of I-bi-it- for ībbi- (lines 2 and 9); ma-na-su-un and the like for manaṣṣum (lines 8, 15, and 20); ta-ar-ta-šu-ma for tartāšuma (line 11); and ū-ša-ši-ix for ušāšūx (line 18). This is a feature of Sargonic, Ur III, archaic OB, and OA, but not classical OB. The semantic indicator 4 is used in the semi-logographic writing of the divine name 4Ešš.DAR, but not in the syllabic spelling of -Li-im (lines 2 and 9) and -HI.1B (line 3); KI is not used in the syllabic spellings of īb-la-t-im (line 4) or īb-la (line 7). The free use of the semantic indicators is characteristic of Old Akkadian writing (MAD II² p. 23); occasionally it is found at post-Ur III Mari (Limet, ARM VII pp. 159-163).

The use of the logographic spelling DUMU "son" (line 3) in the structure PN₁ DUMU PN₂, but of the syllabic spelling me-ir-e-šu (lines 12 and 22) in the noun plus a pronominal suffix is characteristic of OA.

The abnormal spelling ma-na-su-ù (line 15), instead of ma-na-su-un (line 8), has been noted in many spellings in later lexical texts.

The combination of signs Ca+ù is used for Caw in ta-ù-bi-a /tawpiça/ (line 7), as in the Amorite names of the OB period.

The sign BI is used for pi in ta-ù-bi-a /tawpiça/ (line 7) and for ba in bi-el-ti-šu /bêtlišu/ (line 17).

The sign ME in šu-me-šu-[nu] /šumēšumu/ (line 8), me-ki-im /meqîm/ (line 11), and me-ir-e-šu /merêšu/ (lines 12 and 22) is not characteristic of OA writing, as suggested in the case of šu-me- (line 8) by Lambert, RA LXXV p. 96, since in all cases ME is used for me, not mì.

The use of the sign SI for še in ši-ri-ši /ušēriš/ (line 5), but ŠA for ša (passim) and ŠU for šu (passim) is characteristic of post-Ur III Mari, OA, and archaic OB.

The use of the sign ZA for a in ap₁-za-am /apsâm/ (line 1) is known from Old Akkadian to pre-classical OB.
The inscription of Jibbit-Lim, king of Ebla

In the field of phonology we note the following:

The vocalic change of $a > e$ in the vicinity of $e$ may be noted in $u\text{-}bi\text{-}ri\text{-}t\text{-ib}$ /ušērib/ from /juša\text{-}rib/ (line 5), which is post-Sargonic, and $bi\text{-}el\text{-}ti\text{-}šu$ /bêltišu/ (line 17) from /ba\text{-}latišu/, which, in the case of bêlum, appears already in the Pre-Sargonic period.

The preservation of $aw$ takes place in $ta\text{-}ù\text{-}bi\text{-}a$ /tawpi\text{-}a/ (line 7), against the common Akkadian $tāpā$.

The preservation of two syllables $i\text{+}a$ in $ta\text{-}ù\text{-}bi\text{-}a$ /tawpi\text{-}a/ (line 7) may be contrasted with the contraction of $u\text{+}a$ to $ā$ in /āp\text{-}za\text{-}am/ /apsām/ (line 1) from apeu\text{-}am, which is pre-OB.

The loss of the feminine marker $a$ in $bi\text{-}el\text{-}ti\text{-}šu$ /bêltišu/ (line 17) from /ba\text{-}latišu/, which is post-Sargonic.

The vocalic change of $a > e$ in proximity to $r$, observable in $me\text{-}ir\text{-}e\text{-}šu$ /me\text{-}rē\text{-}ēšu/ (lines 12 and 22) from /mar\text{-}ēšu/, is found in OA.

The preservation of $su$ in $ma\text{-}za\text{-}su\text{-}am$ /mazzāsum/ (lines 8 and, similarly, 15 and 20) contrasts with the assimilation of $mē > āš$ in $ta\text{-}ar\text{-}ta\text{-}šu\text{-}ma$ /tartās̄uma/ (line 14) from /tartāsumā/.

The prefix $\text{a}$-$a$ becomes $\text{a}$-$i$ in $I\text{-}bi\text{-}i\text{-}t\text{-}i$ /Jibbi\text{-}i\text{-}t\text{-}i/ (lines 2 and 9) and I$g\text{-}ri\text{-}i\text{-}š\text{-}i$ /Jigriš\text{-}i/ (line 3). This feature is characteristic of Akkadian in all its stages, Pre-Sargonic Ebla, and Pre-Sargonic, Ur III, and post-Ur III Mari, but not of Amorite.

In the field of morphology the following features may be noted:

The gentilic formation $-a\text{+}um$, found in $Ib\text{-}la\text{-}i\text{-}šm$ /Eblajim/ (line 4), is characteristic of the classical Old Babylonian dialect of Mari and of the Assyrian dialect and contrasts with $-\text{+}um$ of the Old Akkadian and Babylonian dialects.

The verbal pattern $jiqtil$ of $I\text{-}bi\text{-}i\text{-}t\text{-}i$ /Jibbi\text{-}i\text{-}t\text{-}i/ (lines 2 and 9) contrasts with the pattern (ji)\text{+}q̄itul of $\text{b}ib\text{+}u\text{+}t\text{+}i$ in Akkadian; the pattern of $Ig\text{-}ri\text{-}i\text{-}š\text{-}i$ /Jigriš\text{-}i/ contrasts with that of $\text{+}j\text{+}ru\text{+}u$ at Pre-Sargonic Ebla and in Old Akkadian.

The feminine prefix $ta\text{-}$, found in $ta\text{-}ù\text{-}bi\text{-}a$ /tawpi\text{-}a/ (line 7) and $ta\text{-}ar\text{-}ta\text{-}šu\text{-}ma$ /tartāšuma/ (line 14), is common Semitic, including Pre-Sargonic Ebla, Pre-Sargonic, Ur III, and post-Ur III Mari and the Assyrian, but not Babylonian, dialect.

The subjunctive suffix $-a$ occurring in (ša) $ta\text{-}ù\text{-}bi\text{-}a$ /tawpi\text{-}a/ (line 7) is paralleled by several examples in the Diyala River region in the Sargonic
period and at Mari in the post-Ur III liver omens and rarely in classical OB. Standard Akkadian has only the suffix -u for the subjunctive.

The participle of the causative-factitive H stem of me-ki-im /meqim/ (line 4) contrasts with the Akkadian S stem of /ušērib/ (line 5) and /ušazziz/ (line 18). This feature is common only in Amorite although its existence at Ebla cannot, a priori, be denied.

The nominative massānum (lines 8 and, similarly, 15) functions as an accusative.

The dependent sentence ṣa Eštar tawṣiq-ta ina Ebla "after Eštar had manifested herself in Ebla" (lines 6-7) exemplifies a case of free syntax known at Pre-Sargonic Ebla-Mari and post-Ur III Mari. Similar may be the case of ʾāšk[un] šumū "he established his name" (lines 18-19) if Lambert's interpretation is accepted.

Besides the logographic entries DUMU (line 5), LUGAL (line 5), IGI (line 16), and ʾEŠ-DAR (passim), the following lexical morphemes, listed in the order of the inscription, are attested: ṣāmān, qāmān, arāhum, ṣo, marātum, ṣin, mas-nāsum, šumum, ana, balātum, u, merūm, raʾānum, ṣa, bāltum, šušānum, šakā-nun], and ulu[ma]. In personal names we find the lexemes nabāṭum in I-bi-īt- (lines 2 and 9) and garāšum in Ig-ri-lū- (line 3). Among geographical names there is Ṣb-la (line 7) and the corresponding gentilic formation Ṣb-la-i-im (line 4); among divine names we have Eštar (passim), occurring freely, and -Lī-im (lines 2 and 9) and -ḤI-IB (line 3), occurring in personal names.

All lexemes recur in Akkadian with the following qualifications: qāmān is attested only in Amorite personal names; balātum is known at Pre-Sargonic Ebla, but in the Ur III period it begins to be used in Babylonia, partially replacing the older naʾāsum; uluma occurs mainly at OB Mari; nabāṭum occurs in Akkadian and is productive in an Amorite personal name, while garāšum, occurring in the Pre-Sargonic period at Ebla and in the Sargonic period in Babylonia, is productive only in Ebla personal names; the divine name Līm, first attested at Pre-Sargonic Ebla, becomes the dynastic god of Mari in the OB period.

The language of the votive inscription of Jibbiṭ-Līm is clearly Akkadian with an admixture of features that are either non-Akkadian or are Akkadian with certain limitations. Among these are: The preservation of the diphthong ɔw, against ē of Akkadian; the subjunctive ṣa, against -a of Akkadian (except -a in the Diyala region); the hifil meqim against the šafel of Akkadian and the lexeme
The inscription of Jibbiṣ-Lîm, king of Ebla

qâran against kunnuqân of Akkadian; free syntax, against the obligatory syntax of Akkadian. Several features of the writing and language of the inscription are called "Assyrian" above pp. 17-18. On all these levels, the votive inscription of Ebla resembles, more than anything else, the votive inscriptions and the liver omina of Mari which are also composed in the Akkadian language and also contain an admixture of features that cannot be classified as Akkadian.

The following conclusion on the language of Ebla and Mari, partly discussed also in my forthcoming article "Mari and the Kish Civilization" (see above, section 1), may be drawn:

The non-Akkadian features that may be recovered in the post-Ur III votive inscription of Jibbiṣ-Lîm of Ebla belong to the local language that is known at Mari from the Ur III votive inscriptions and the post-Ur III administrative texts and liver omens.

The local language of Ebla and Mari is, for all practical purposes, identical.

The late language of Ebla and Mari is a direct descendant of the language that was used in the area in Pre-Sargonic times.

The fact that not all features may be duplicated both at Ebla and Mari and that not all features occurring in the late periods are reflected in earlier times at Ebla and Mari may be explained partly by the disparities in the nature and quantity of sources from the two sites, partly by areal and temporal differentiations.

The question of the so-called "Assyrian" features in the writing and language of Ebla-Mari, which abound from the Pre-Sargonic to the post-Ur III periods, must be left for the future to resolve.