

ASSURBANIPAL AT DER

Eckart Frahm

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the relations between the Assyrian empire and the city of Der during the Neo-Assyrian period and publishes a fragmentary royal inscription of Assurbanipal commemorating reconstruction work on the temple of Anu rabû in Der.

For millennia, the city of Der was the most important urban center in the border region between Babylonia and Elam. Located on the road connecting Babylon and Susa, it was of major strategic significance, not only for the Babylonians and Elamites, but also, once they began to expand towards the south, for the Assyrians. In the words of Postgate & Mattila (2004: 240):

[Der] stands at a bottle-neck where both the principal route from Babylonia and that from the northwest and Assyria are funnelled between the outliers of the Zagros which delimit the plain on the east, and the marshy areas to the south [...]. For both Babylonia and Assyria any assault on or from Susiana was almost obliged to pass by Der.

Its strategic position is probably the reason why Der is one of the very few cities depicted on the famous “Babylonian Map of the World” (Horowitz 1998: 21).

The ruins of Der are buried under Tell ‘Aqar, a major mound lying about one km northwest of the modern town of Badra, close to the modern border between Iran and Iraq. Due to this politically charged location, but also because of poor sanitary conditions and the high water level at the site,¹ Der never has been properly excavated. Occasionally, local inhabitants have found stray inscribed objects at Tell ‘Aqar,² and a few archaeologists have briefly visited the mound,³ but with the exception of a short survey undertaken by Barthel Hrouda in the spring of 1971,⁴ Der has remained essentially unexplored. Its history, which began in the Early

¹ Smith 1932: 28, referring to a short visit he paid to Badra and Tell ‘Aqar in the spring of 1930, states rather bluntly: “The site is most unattractive from the excavator’s point of view.”

² Safar 1951: 57.

³ See, e. g., Smith 1932.

⁴ See Hrouda 1973.

Dynastic period or even earlier and lasted until the Late Babylonian period, has to be reconstructed almost exclusively from the evidence provided in texts from other Mesopotamian cities.⁵

The goal of this article is to cast, through the publication of a new text, some additional light on Der's role during the Neo-Assyrian period, especially during the reign of the 7th century Assyrian king Assurbanipal. Like virtually every modern study of Assyria's imperial phase, the article owes much to the master of Neo-Assyrian studies, Simo Parpola, and is dedicated to him in admiration.

Assurbanipal's dealings with Der cannot properly be understood without a recapitulation of what we know about the history of the city during the Neo-Assyrian period in general. Since the key events determining the relationship between the Assyrians and Der during the 250 years that preceded Assurbanipal's reign have been recently summarized and discussed by Postgate & Mattila (2004: 240–241), the following overview will be brief.⁶

After overcoming the crisis years of the 11th and 10th century, when Assyria had been reduced to its core area in the course of incursions by Aramaean semi-nomads, Assyrian kings resumed the attempts of their successful predecessors of the Middle Assyrian period to enlarge the territory of their state and plunder foreign lands. Assyrian armies began again to cross into neighboring regions, including areas to the south. It was during the reign of Adad-nerari II (911–891) that the Assyrians conquered for the first time the land and the city of Der.

The take-over proved to be ephemeral. Perhaps already in 831, and then definitely in 815/814, under Šamši-Adad V (823–811), Assyrian troops had to take once again military action against Der. In 815 or 814, they carried away the statues of Der's main god, Anu rabû,⁷ and of a few minor deities, among them Šarrat-Deri, Mar-biti, Urkittu, and Sakkud of Bubê.⁸ The event was deemed important enough to

⁵ At present, no comprehensive modern treatment of the history of Der exists. A useful yet out-dated overview of pertinent sources can be found in E. Unger's article on Der in RIA 2, 199–201. The most important recent study of the history of Der during the Neo-Assyrian period, especially during the phase from the 9th century to the reign of Sargon II, is Postgate & Mattila 2004.

⁶ Postgate's and Mattila's article gives textual references for most of the events discussed in the following paragraphs. Only when such references are missing will we provide them here.

⁷ Anu rabû was closely associated with Ištaran, and it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between these two deities. For the reading of AN.GAL, the usual writing of the theonym, see the note on YBC 2368, l. 1, further below.

⁸ The Assyrian eponym chronicle B4 reports for the year 831, the first eponymate of Šarru-ḫattu-ipel, that the god Anu rabû "came from Der" (Millard 1994: 30), a remark that seems to indicate that the Assyrians took aggressive action against Der in that year, deporting its main deity. Finkel & Reade 1998: 249–250, however, have questioned the correctness of the entry, hypothesizing that the god was in fact deported only in 815, during the second eponymate of Šarru-ḫattu-ipel. The matter remains unclear, and one wonders whether it may not rather be the entry for 814 (Millard 1994: 32) that may be mistaken. According to this entry, Anu rabû "went (back) to Der," that is, he would have been repatriated by the Assyrians during this year.

become a main topic of a letter sent to the king in the name of the god Aššur (RIMA 3, 103.4 = SAA 3 41).

A few years later, Der slipped away again from the Assyrian sphere of influence. In 795 and 794, Adad-nerari III (810–783) campaigned against the city and, in 785, he returned the divine statues taken away from Der on an earlier occasion.

While it remains uncertain whether Tiglath-pileser III (744–727) truly did deport large numbers of people from Der, as his annals might indicate,⁹ it is very likely that it was under the iron fist of this very king that the Assyrians eventually annexed the city.¹⁰ From the entitlement monument VA 209 (VS 1, no. 70),¹¹ we know for certain that by 724, the third year of Shalmaneser V (726–722), the Der region had become an Assyrian province, with a governor called Il-yada'.¹²

In 720, Sargon II (721–705) fought a major battle with Elamite troops in the province of Der. Even though the Elamites seem to have prevailed in the fight, the Assyrians managed to retain possession of Der,¹³ since it is from this city that Sargon started his reconquest of Babylonia in 710.¹⁴ Sargon was clearly aware of the strategic importance of treating the people of Der well in order to assure their loyalty: in various texts, he claims that he freed the city of the corvée service to which it had been earlier subjected.¹⁵ There is also evidence that Sargon gave expensive presents to Der's religious leader, the *šatammu* Saggil-dubbib, when the latter visited Assyria.¹⁶

During the reign of Sennacherib (704–681), it transpired yet again that the Assyrians could not rely on Der's unqualified support. In 694, when the Elamite king

⁹ See the discussion in Postgate & Mattila 2004: 241, n. 16.

¹⁰ A letter from the Governor's Archive at Nippur, written in the third quarter of the 8th century, seems to imply that Kudurru, the *šandabakku* of Nippur, was involved in the reconstruction of the *ziqqurrat* at Der, see Cole 1996: 50–51, 93 no. 33. The letter cannot be dated precisely, but must have been written before Tiglath-pileser took possession of Der.

¹¹ Now extensively discussed by Postgate & Mattila 2004.

¹² Other cities in the eastern border region, such as Laḫiru and Dur-Šarrukku, were also annexed by the Assyrians in the second half of the 8th century; see Frame 1992: 222. As pointed out by Postgate & Mattila 2004: 241–242, Der remained, throughout the period of Assyrian domination, an essentially Babylonian city in linguistic, cultural, and religious terms.

¹³ See the references collected by Brinkman 1964: 13, n. 42.

¹⁴ See the reconstruction of the campaign by Fuchs 1994: 399–405. The letters from Der and Yadburu written during the reign of Sargon are edited in SAA 15 111–154.

¹⁵ In his cylinder inscription, to mention only one text, Sargon calls himself *mušaššik tupšikki Dēri mušapšihu niššun* “who had the corvée work removed from Der and gave its people peace” (Fuchs 1993: 32, l. 5). The passage is all the more significant since it follows immediately after a reference to the privileged position of the city of Assur, Assyria's religious center. Interestingly, already the Old Assyrian king Ilu-šumma, when claiming that he had established the “freedom” (*andurāru*) of the Akkadians, explicitly mentioned the city of “Der of the god Ištaran” (RIMA 1, 32.2, ll. 55–65).

¹⁶ See SAA 7 58 r. iii 23–24, and for the date of this document, H. Baker, PNA 3/I: 1060, s.v. Saggil-kēnu-ubbib. The *šatammu* [...]aya, who was active under Esarhaddon or Assurbanipal, received such presents as well; see SAA 7 126 r.18, and for the date, F. M. Fales, PNA 1/I: 6, s.v. Abdi-Milki 2. See also Postgate & Mattila 2004: 242.

Ḫallušu-inšušinak marched into Babylonia, then governed by Sennacherib's son Aššur-nadin-šumi, the citizens of Der supported the eastern invader. Sennacherib punished them for their infidelity by taking once again the statue of Anu rabû to Assyria. For a short period, Der was not put under the authority of a provincial governor, but rather under that of a military commander (*rab bîrte*), the same one commissioned with the administration of some of the eastern territories conquered during Sennacherib's "seventh campaign" against Elam in 693.¹⁷

Sennacherib took a hard line against most of Babylonia until the end of his reign and showed little interest in providing for the cults of the Babylonian cities. When Esarhaddon became his successor in 680, the new king immediately changed this policy. Many divine statues "godnapped" from Babylonia by Sennacherib were repatriated. Among them were the images of Anu rabû and other deities from Der, which Esarhaddon returned to their home city in his first regnal year.¹⁸ Relations with Elam remained tense until a peace agreement between Esarhaddon and Urtaku brought some relief in 674.¹⁹ In an unknown year, Esarhaddon received a note about a group of 15 deserters(?) (*maqtûte*), one of them apparently a Greek, whom the governor of Der had caught and sent on to a representative of the king for further interrogation.²⁰ In 670, Šulmu-beli-lašme, the Assyrian governor of Der, served as eponym.²¹

After Esarhaddon's death in 669, Assurbanipal (668–ca. 630) became king of Assyria, while his brother Šamaš-šumu-ukin (667–648) took over the office of king of Babylonia. Der, it seems, remained, like Laḫiru and Dur-Šarrukku, under direct Assyrian rule.²² In 668, Assurbanipal fought against the mountainous region of Qirbit to relieve the inhabitants of Der from incursions from there.²³ In 653, Der served as launching point for the army Assurbanipal sent against the Elamite king Teumman.²⁴ During the rebellion instigated against him one year later by Šamaš-šumu-ukin, Der apparently remained loyal to the Assyrian king,²⁵ and this seems not to have changed until the end of Assurbanipal's reign.

¹⁷ See Luckenbill 1924: 39, IV 54–61. The letter SAA 17 136, which reports that Assyrian soldiers are being stationed opposite of Elamite troops at Der, has been dated by Dietrich to the reign of Sennacherib; however, D. A. Nevez, PNA 2/II: 720, s.v. Marduk-nāšir no. 4 dates it to the time of Sargon.

¹⁸ Grayson 1975: 125, l. 3; Borger 1956: 74, ll. 20–21, 84, l. 42; RIMB 2, 6.31.11, l. 10, 6.31.12, l. 19–20.

¹⁹ See Waters 2000: 37–45.

²⁰ SAA 16 136. For the Greek mentioned in the letter, see Rollinger & Korenjak 2001. Cf. also SAA 18 6.

²¹ Millard 1994: 52.

²² See Frame 1992: 222.

²³ Grayson 1975: 86, l. 37; Borger 1996: 180–181, 219, Prism E, Stück 12. The episode is also reported in later inscriptions of this king.

²⁴ Borger 1996: 104, 225, B V 84–85.

²⁵ The letter ABL 460 (De Vaan 1995: 259–261), to be dated either to the end of 649 (De Vaan 1995: 61–62) or to the immediate aftermath of the Šamaš-šumu-ukin rebellion (Waters 2000:

What happened in Der during the last years of Assyrian rule is mostly unclear. One of the few available sources is SAA 18 163, a letter written in Babylon by Nabû-zero-ukin and probably addressed to Sîn-šarru-iškun, the last Assyrian king to rule from Nineveh; it was most likely sent to him shortly after he came to power in 627.²⁶ The letter informs us that a golden seal the king wanted to deliver to Šumu-iddin, the *šatammu* of Der, had not been handed over, perhaps because the *šatammu* had been captured.²⁷ In Nabopolassar's 3rd year, 623, Der joined the Babylonian rebellion against Assyria. Although Sîn-šarru-iškun sent troops against Der and temporarily reconquered it, his troops were eventually defeated,²⁸ an event that marked the end of the Assyrian domination over Der.

* * *

Assyrian political and military activities were frequently accompanied by various acts of religious intervention. This holds also true for Assyria's approach towards Der. On several occasions, as pointed out in the preceding paragraphs, Assyrian armies took away from Der the statues of the city's main god, Anu rabû, and of various members of his divine entourage, to return them only when Der's political loyalty seemed assured again. This "stick and carrot" policy was applied to other Babylonian cities as well.²⁹ But when Der became the center of a new Assyrian province, something more substantial had to be done. In order to demonstrate their commitment to Der, the kings of Assyria felt they had to sponsor periodical reconstruction projects on Der's principal temple, the É-dim-gal-kalam-ma ("House, Great Bond of the Land") of Anu rabû, an old and prestigious sanctuary already patronized by Šulgi of Ur (2094–2047).³⁰

The earliest evidence for Assyrian involvement in the rebuilding of this temple comes from a letter from the last years of the reign of Sargon II. In SAA 15 4:17–r.6, the sender, a governor of Arrapha called Issar-duri, quotes from a note he had received from Šamaš-bel-ušur, who had taken over from Il-yada' the office of governor of Der.³¹ Šamaš-bel-ušur, apparently engaged in reconstructing Der's principal temple (*bīt ili*), wonders whether he should not place some royal

68), reports that Assyrian troops would not delay in Der but would proceed to the south to pursue the rebel Nabû-bel-šumati.

²⁶ For this dating, based on "museological" arguments, see Reynolds 2003: XXXIII. Frame 1992: 274 is to be corrected accordingly.

²⁷ Ll. 14–17. The meaning of "Šumu-iddin za uš" in l. 17 remains unclear. AHW. 1509a reads *za-nid* and assumes that this *hapax* comes from the Aramaic root *znd* "to plunder," while Vera Chama-za 2002: 495–496 suggests the emendation *ša-bit* ("Šumu-iddina ist verhaftet worden").

²⁸ Grayson 1975: 89–90, l. 29–36; see the restorations proposed by Glassner 2004: 216–219.

²⁹ See Holloway 2002: 123–144, 277–283.

³⁰ For sources on the history of the É-dim-gal-kalam-ma, see George 1993a: 76.

³¹ For a discussion of Šamaš-bel-ušur's activities and the date of his investiture as governor of Der, see Postgate & Mattila 2004: 252–254.

inscriptions (*muššarāni*) in the walls of the sanctuary, and Issar-duri forwards his request to the king, asking him for a model text to be sent to him from Assyria.³²

Nothing is known about any building activities in Der undertaken in the reign of Sennacherib, but under Esarhaddon, who repatriated the gods of Der, we have once more evidence for construction work in the É-dim-gal-kalam-ma precinct. It comes from the letter SAA 10 349, dated by Parpola on astronomical grounds to VII/12/671 and sent to Esarhaddon by his Babylonian agent Mar-Issar. The key passage, r.11–28, deserves to be quoted in full:

¹¹ú É DINGIR.MEŠ ¹²ša BÀD.AN^{ki} TA* bé-et uš-še-e-šú ¹³kar-ru-u-ni a-du-na-kan-ni ¹⁴*ŠA.TAM ¹⁴ú ¹⁴*EN-pi-qit-ta-a-te ša BÀD.AN^{ki} ¹⁵ina UGU a-ḫi-iš ú-bu-ku me-me-e-ni ¹⁶ina muḫ-ḫi la iq-ri-ib MU.AN.NA an-ni-tú ¹⁷ú-sa-ar-ri-u i-ra-aš-ši-pu ¹⁸u₄-mu ep-pu-šu u₄-mu ú-ra-am-mu-u ¹⁹a-se-me ma-a DUMU LUGAL ša KUR ELAM.MA^{ki} ²⁰in-ta-ra-aš ¹⁴ú-ra-si ²¹a-na lib-bi is-sap-ra BÀD.AN^{ki} ²²ina UGU ta-ḫu-mu ša KUR šá-ni-ti šu-ú ²³šum-ma "pa-an" MAN EN-iá ma-ḫir ¹⁴*qur-bu-tú ²⁴ú ¹⁴e-tin-nu aš-šur^{ki}-a-a lil-lik-u-ni ²⁵ina lib-bi le-"e"-k[u]-"lu dul-lu" ša "É DINGIR".ME[š] ²⁶[le]-e-pu-š[u šumu ša šarri bēlīya] ²⁷a-na da-ra-[a-ti liškunū] ²⁸a-na ma-šar-ti š[a bīt ilāni] ²⁹LUGAL be-lí lu-[u la išīāf]

Then the temple of Der: from the moment its foundations were laid until now, the *šatammu*-official and the commissioners of Der have been pushing it onto each other, and nobody has set about it. This year, they have started to build, (but) one day they do the work, the next day they leave it. I have heard that the crown prince of Elam has become troublesome and sent mud-brick masons there. Der is situated on the border of another country. If it pleases the king, my lord, let a royal confidant³³ and an Assyrian architect go and live there. Let them perform the work on the temple [and establish the name of the king, my lord], forever. The king, my lord, should [not neglect] the guard of [the temple].

This passage provides some interesting information. Because progress on the reconstruction of the temple had been slow due to uncertainties about who was really in charge, Mar-Issar urges Esarhaddon to send Assyrian experts to speed the work up. He argues that Der is situated close to “another country,” a loosely veiled allusion to its strategic position on the border of Elam, and that the Elamite crown prince is about to sponsor his own building work at Der. These remarks imply that Mar-Issar was concerned about attempts by the Elamites to compete with the Assyrians for the sympathy of the elites and the people of Der, and the possibility that they might gain political support from the city if the Assyrians did not act more efficiently.³⁴ It is unclear whether Esarhaddon reacted to Mar-Issar’s request. In

³² Another text from the reign of Sargon II (thus H. D. Baker, PNA I/2, 312, s.v. Bēl-iddina no. 8) mentioning the temple of Der is the letter SAA 17 43. The sender, a Babylonian in royal service, asks for explicit instructions from the king to inspect the temples of Der and Nippur.

³³ For this understanding of *ša-qurbūti*, usually translated as “bodyguard,” see Radner 2002: 13–14.

³⁴ For commentary on these matters, see Parpola 1983: 266–267 and Waters 2000: 44–45. Note that the people of Der worshipped gods from eastern regions, such as the aforementioned

the letter SAA 10 253, dated by Parpola to 670/VI/1, the Assyrian chief exorcist Marduk-šakin-šumi writes to the king that the religious ceremonies in the city of Der are to be conducted in the same way as those that were held for Marduk in the month of Tishri (r.8–9).³⁵ Holloway has argued that the letter might indicate that the temple construction had been finished in the meantime,³⁶ but whether this was really the case remains uncertain.

Assurbanipal, Esarhaddon's son and successor on the Assyrian throne, followed the lead of his father and devoted himself to construction work on the É-dim-gal-kalam-ma in Der. Until now, two royal inscriptions and a historical-literary text, all from Nineveh, bore witness to Assurbanipal's investment in the building of Anu rabû's temple. The three passages read as follows:

Prism T iii 15–17 (Borger 1996: 144, 207):

¹⁵É-dim-gal-kalam-ma É AN.GAL ¹⁶šá qé-reb BÂD.AN^{ki} ¹⁷a-na si-ḫi-ir-ti-šú ar-šip ú-šak-lil

I reconstructed in its entirety the É-dim-gal-kalam-ma, the temple of Anu rabû, which is located inside Der, and completed it.

Inscription from the Istar Temple, ll. 69–72 (Borger 1996: 274, 292):

⁶⁹É-dim-gal-kalam-ma É [A]N.GAL šá B[AD.AN^{ki} a-na] ṣi-ḫir-ti-šú ar-šip ú-šak-lil ⁷⁰[AN].GAL ^dGAŠAN-BÂD.AN^{ki} ^dDUMU-É qé-reb-šú ú-še-rib-ma ú-[.....] ⁷¹[.....-t]i[?] KI.TUŠ ⁸¹⁵MES.[MÁ].GAN.NA GIŠ da-re-^re^r a-[n]a mu-šab be-lu- // EN-ti-šú KÙ.[BABBAR eb]-^rbu ú'-[šal-biš(?)] ⁷²[..... K]Û[?]. BABBAR ša // šá KÙ.GI HUŠ.A lit-bu-šú a-na s[i-ḫir-ti-šú(?)] ṣi-ḫi-ir-ti-šú

I reconstructed [in] its entirety the É-dim-gal-kalam-ma, the temple of Anu rabû of Der, and completed it. I brought Anu rabû, Belet-Deri, and Mar-biti into it and ... [.....] I overlaid with pure silver [.....] the seat of sissoo-wood, the eternal wood, to make it his (Anu rabû's) lordly dwelling place [.....] silver that was overlaid with red gold [I] ... it in its entirety.

K 2632 iii 17–20 (Bauer 1933: 75–76, pl. 23–24, Babylonian script):

¹⁷AN.GAL ^dA-num GAL-[ú] ¹⁸it-ti-ka il-lak šá É-[su[?]] ¹⁹É-dim-gal-kalam-ma te-pu-šú-ú-[ma] ²⁰ta-ad-da-áš-ši

AN.GAL, (i.e.,) Anu rabû, will go (on campaign) with you (Assurbanipal), since you built [his] temple É-dim-gal-kalam-ma and gave it to him.

The last passage is part of an interesting, yet unfortunately badly broken text about a military operation Assurbanipal was about to undertake against Elam. It assures

Sakkud of the city of Bubê. Bubê was situated in (A)raši, a buffer state between Mesopotamia and Elam (see Postgate & Mattila 2004: 250 and, for Sakkud, Borger 1988: 73–74).

³⁵ The letter is to be compared to SAA 13 4, a royal letter exhorting the priests of Der to perform their rituals properly and informing them that an intercalary Adar had been implemented. For possible dates of SAA 13 4, see Parpola 1983: 381–382.

³⁶ Holloway 2002: 246, n. 78.

the king, among other things, that Aššur, Marduk, Nabû, Anu rabû, Šamaš, and Lugal-asal of the city of Šapazza would support him in the impending battle against the eastern rival state. The text mentions Ummanigaš (= Ĥumban-nikaš (II))³⁷ and Ummanappi, two sons of Urtaku of Elam (675–664?) who had fled to Assyria to escape the wrath of Teumman (664?–653),³⁸ and is perhaps to be dated shortly before or after Assurbanipal's campaign against the latter in 653. Hence it might be argued that Assurbanipal's reconstruction work on the temple of Anu rabû must have taken place before 652, and it is conceivable that the king simply continued the work Esarhaddon had begun at the end of his reign. However, it is also noteworthy that the rebuilding of the É-dim-gal-kalam-ma is mentioned, as shown above, in the prologue to Prism T, probably written in 645, but not in the very similar prologue of Prism C, composed two years earlier. This observation could be taken as an argument for the assumption that Assurbanipal's main work on the temple occurred not before, but rather in the aftermath of Šamaš-šumu-ukin's rebellion. Perhaps the reconstruction work stretched over many years, but proceeded on a rather modest scale, before it was intensified and eventually completed between 647 and 645.³⁹

So far, our knowledge about the building activities sponsored by Neo-Assyrian kings at Der has come exclusively from letters, or from royal inscriptions from other cities, which refer to Der only in a cursory way. In fact, not a single 1st millennium royal inscription focusing on Der and the building of the É-dim-gal-kalam-ma temple has been identified. The evidence from earlier periods is not much richer. A 3rd millennium (?) Sumerian dedicatory text on a stone object that was found in Susa reports that a ruler whose name is lost performed construction work on a temple in Der, most probably that of Ištaran/Anu rabû.⁴⁰ Two fragmentary Old Babylonian royal inscriptions from the reign of Ilum-muttābil of Der (RIME 4, 12.2.2) may have described such work as well, but since they are not complete, this is not absolutely certain. A short Sumerian brick inscription from the time of Kurigalzu (I or II), which was found by a local woman at Tell'Aqar in the 1920s, is definitely devoted to building work on the É-dim-gal-kalam-ma.⁴¹

³⁷ Ummanigaš became eventually, in 653–652(?), king of Elam, see Waters 2000: 56–61.

³⁸ Borger 1996: 97, 223, B iv 79–86. See also Waters 2000: 47, 65, n. 57.

³⁹ See Borger 1996: 207. For the dates of Assurbanipal's Prisms C and T, see now Novotny 2008, revising earlier proposals by Borger 1996: 131, Parpola, PNA 1/I: XVIII, Finkel & Reade 1998: 256–257, and Holloway 2002: 253 n. 94.

⁴⁰ Scheil, MDP 4, pl. 1, no. 3. The object must have been brought to Susa in the course of one of the many Elamite raids into Mesopotamia. Thureau-Dangin 1907: 174–175, suggests that the inscription was written before the Ur III period.

⁴¹ Smith 1932. The brick inscription, which helped to confirm the identification of Tell'Aqar with the ancient city of Der, is remarkable because it is accompanied by depictions of an Egyptianizing sun-disk with a snake and an Egyptian god, Onuris (Smith 1932: 31) or, more probably, Amun-Ra (Woods 2004: 74–76). The snake is undoubtedly related to the snake-god Niraḥ, who was worshipped at Der and occasionally identified with Anu rabû / Ištaran.

The small number of inscriptions from Der is hardly surprising given that the mound of Tell'Aqar, ancient Der, has never been excavated. One would not expect to find too many texts from the city in modern repositories of cuneiform texts. It is therefore all the more welcome that the Yale Babylonian Collection houses a fragmentary cylinder inscription from the reign of Assurbanipal that, even though it is difficult to read, undoubtedly has as its main topic the rebuilding of the É-dim-gal-kalam-ma at Der. The text, catalogued as YBC 2368 and mistakenly described as a “Nebuchadnezzar cylinder” in the collection’s inventory book, was identified by me as an Assurbanipal inscription in 2004. It is published here with the kind permission of Benjamin R. Foster, Curator of the Babylonian Collection, and Ulla Kasten, Associate Curator.⁴²

YBC 2368

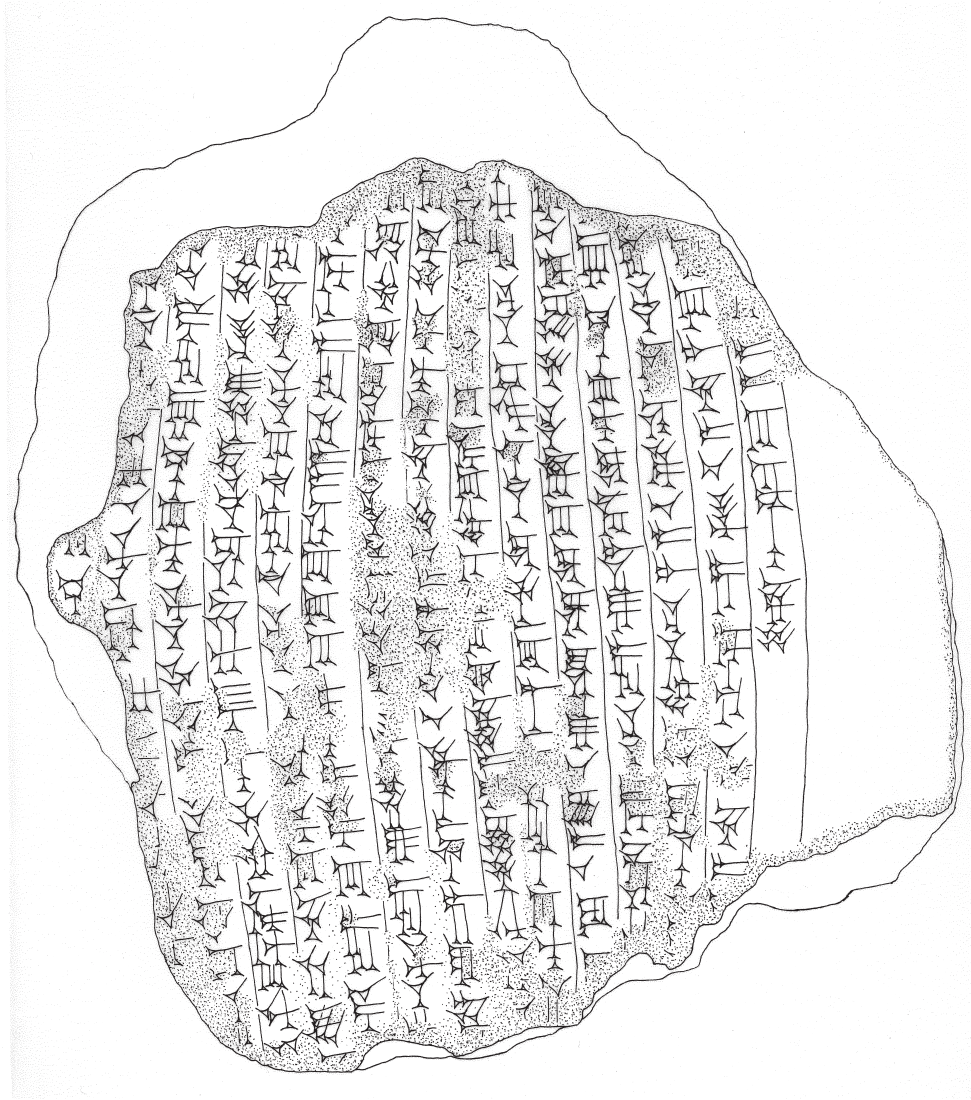
Transliteration

- 0' [ina ūmēšūma
 1' [É-dim-gal-kalam-ma (ša qereb Dēr) bīt AN.GAL] EN G[AL bēliya ša labāriš
 illikūma]
 2' [.....] x x x x áš-ra'-ti-šú' áš-te-'e' ina 'ši'-p[ir⁴Kulla eššiš ušēpišma²]
 3' [..... ú]-'zaq-qir hur-sa-niš a-na' šat-ti AN.GAL EN ši-i-ri ši-p[ir šāšu² ḥadiš
 lippalisma]
 4' [yāti² AN.Š]ÁR-DÙ-IBILA LUGAL KUR Aš-'šur' NUN pa-liḥ-ka TI u₄-me SUD.MEŠ
 še-b[é-e littūti]
 5' [tūb šīri ḥu-u]d lib-bi na-'ma-ri ka-bat-ti' ši-i-me ši-ma-ti ina 'li-i'-[ti u
 danāni²]
 6' [šēr na-ki]-re-ia šu-zi-za-a[n]-'ni'-ma ku²-šu-du a-a-bi-ia me-e-'x' [.....]
 7' [išid kussé LUGAL]-'ú'-ti-ia ú-ḥum-'miš šur-ši-di it²-ti 'AN'-e 'ù KI'-tim
 ki-'i'²-[ni² palū'a]
 8' [ayyumma rubū EGI]R šá ina u₄-me BALA-šú ši-pir šá-'a-šú' in-na-'ḥu' an-
 ḥu-us-'su' [luddiš]
 9' [šumī itti šumīšu] 'liš'-tur' MU.SAR-'ú'-a li-mur-'ma i'.GIŠ lip-šu-uš
 'udu²SISKUR² BAL²-qi² it²-t[i mušarēšu]
 10' [liškun ik-ri-bi]-'i'-šú AN.'GAL' i-'šem'-me šá šu-mì šat-ru ina ši-pir ni-
 kil-ti i-pa-a[š²-ši-tu]
 11' [mušarū'a i'abbatu] 'ù²' lu-u a-šar-šú 'ú'-nak-ka-ru-ma it-ti MU.SAR-e-šú
 l[a išakkanu]
 12' [.....] x rik'-sa-ti-ia ú-paṭ-ta-ru AN.GAL EN ši-'i'²-[ru²]
 13' [.....] di²-i² ù di'-lip-ti šá-a-šú qá-du' kim²'-ti-i²-šú² 'x' [.....]
 14' [.....] x' a-na 'ḥa'-pe-'e' UN.MEŠ-šú a-na šá-la-'la²' [.....]
 15' [šumšu zērāšu ina mātāti²] empty li-ḥal-liq-ma a-a i[r-ši-šú rēmu]

Empty space, then broken away

⁴² The fragmentary inscription measures 160 mm in length and 90 mm in height.

YBC 2368



Translation

⁰ [..... At that time], ¹⁻² I sought the (original) emplacement [of É-dim-gal-kalama (which is inside Der), the temple of Anu rabû], the gr[eat] lord, [my lord, which had become old] ... [I had it rebuilt anew] with the wor[k of the (brick-)god Kulla] ³ [..... and] made it high as a mountain.

On account of this, [may] Anu rabû, the exalted lord, [look upon this] wor[k with pleasure]. ⁴⁻⁵ Determine [for me, Ass]urbanipal, king of Assyria, the prince who reveres you, as my fate, a long life, fulln[ess of old age, good health, ha]ppiness, and a radiant mood. ⁵⁻⁶ Let me prevail [over] my [enem]ies through pow[er and strength]. To drive off my opponents ... [.....]. ⁷ Make [the foundation of] my [royal throne] strong like a cliff, ma[ke my rule] as stable as heaven and earth.

⁸ [May any futu]re [prince], during the days of whose reign this work falls into disrepair, [renovate] its dilapidated sections. ⁹⁻¹⁰ May he write [my name with his (own) name], read my royal inscription, anoint it with oil, offer a sacrifice, [and place (my royal inscription)] wit[h his (own) royal inscription]. Anu rabû will (then) listen to his [prayer]s.

¹⁰⁻¹¹ (But) as for the one who eras[es] my inscribed name by some crafty device, [destroys my royal inscription], or changes its position and [does] n[ot place it] together with his (own) royal inscription, ¹² [.....] ... dismantles my construction, [may] Anu rabû, the exal[ted] lord [.....] ¹³ [.....] *di'u*-illness and anxiety him together with his *family* ... [.....] ¹⁴ [.....] to destroy his people, to plunder [.....]. ¹⁵ May he make [*his name and his descendants*] disappear [from the lands], and h[ave] no [pity on him].

Remarks

YBC 2368 is one of several inscriptions of Assurbanipal on clay cylinders, the typical support for royal inscriptions in 1st millennium Babylonia. The other Babylonian Assurbanipal cylinder inscriptions refer to construction work, mostly on temples and cellas (or chapels), in Babylon (Frame 1995 (= RIMB 2), 6.32.1, 6.32.3, 6.32.4, 6.32.5, 6.32.6), Sippar (6.32.12), Borsippa (6.32.13), Nippur (6.32.15, structurally different from other texts), Uruk (6.32.19), and possibly Akkad (6.32.20). The inscriptions usually begin, sometimes after an invocation of a deity, with a passage presenting the king with his titles and epithets and continue with a report about various of his non-military activities, a description of the building project the inscription is mainly devoted to, and a request for divine support. They conclude with blessings directed towards pious later rulers, and curses against impious ones. Several of these elements are optional. It is very likely that the present text, in its complete state, had essentially the same structure.

Neither the name of Der nor that of the temple É-dim-gal-kalam-ma is preserved in YBC 2368. The references to Anu rabû (ll. 3', 10', and 12'), whose only significant sanctuary was in Der, leave, however, little doubt about the identity and location of the building whose reconstruction is commemorated in this text.

0'–2': Restored after RIMB 2, 6.32.12, ll. 16–18. See also *ina ši-pir* ⁴*Kulla eš-šiš ú-še-piš-ma* in RIMB 2, 6.32.1, l. 21.

1': For the reading of the divine name AN.GAL as Anu rabû, see MZL: 250, Borger 1956: 74 l. 20, and Bauer 1933: 75–76 iii 17 (the passage is quoted above); but cf. Jursa 1997: 108, with evidence that AN.GAL was occasionally also read *Ištarān*. Anu rabû, lit. “the great (sky-god) Anu,” and *Ištarān*, lit. “the two Ištar(s),” were alternative names, perhaps derived from originally distinct deities, of Der's main god. The names seem to point to some connection with the sky, but the contexts in which Anu rabû / Ištarān appears indicate that the deity was far more prominently related to the chthonic world of snakes; he was occasionally identified with the snake god Nirah, who is also known to have been his son and messenger. Anu rabû / Ištarān was, furthermore, closely linked to ideas about the administration of justice.⁴³

2': One expects at the beginning of the line *i-qu-pu in-nab-tu* “(which) had become buckled and collapsed” (RIMB 2, 6.32.12, l. 17) or *i-qu-pu ik-kám-ru* “(which) had become buckled and a heap of ruin” (RIMB 2, 6.32.19, l. 23). The remaining traces, however, are too modest to establish the correct reading with certainty.

3': For the reading of the damaged signs at the beginning of the line, see RIMB 2, 6.33.4 (Šamaš-šumu-ukin), l. 27: *ú-zaq-qir ħur-sa-niš* (note the identical orthography). The second half of the line (as well as *yāti* at the beginning of l. 4') is restored after RIMB 2, 6.32.19, ll. 24–25.

4'–5': Restored after RIMB 2, 6.32.19, l. 26. An alternative, yet less likely restoration in l. 5' would be [*tūb šīri nu-u*]g *lib-bi*, following Sargon's Display inscription, ll. 193–194 (Fuchs 1994: 247–248). Note the writing *ši-i-me/mi*, formally an imp. 2nd sing. fem., but used here to address a masculine deity. The same applies to the imperative forms in l. 7'.

5'–6': Restored after Assurbanipal's Prism A x 38–39: *ina līti u danāni ušazzizū'inni šēr nakrēya* (Borger 1996: 71).

7': Restored after Esarhaddon's Uruk C inscription, l. 19 (Borger 1956: 77, § 49 = RIMB 2, 6.31.17). For the imperative forms, see the note on ll. 4'–5'. Several of Assurbanipal's cylinder inscriptions from Babylonia conclude this section with a short passage in which the request for divine support is extended to Šamaš-šumu-ukin, Assurbanipal's brother, who was king of Babylon from 667–648; see, for instance, RIMB 2, 6.32.19, l. 27. In YBC 2368, no mention is made of him. This

⁴³ For a recent discussion of the nature of the god, see Woods 2004: 68–76 (with further literature).

silence does not prove, however, that the cylinder should be dated to the period after the Šamaš-šumu-ukin rebellion; it is rather owed to Der's status as the capital of an Assyrian province.

8'–10': Restored after RIMB 2, 6.32.19, ll. 28–30 (which has *šuāti* instead of *šāšu* and Istar of Uruk instead of Anu rabû).

10'–11': Restored after RIMB 2, 6.32.5, ll. 21–22 (which includes a reference to Assurbanipal's brother and has *lū* instead of *u lū*).

12': For *riksu puṭṭuru* in the context of construction work, see CAD R: 348. I know of no parallels that would help to restore the gap at the beginning of the line.

13': With regard to the plene writing in *'kim[?]-ti-i[?]-šú[?]* (reading uncertain), compare *ik-ri-bi]-i[?]-šú[?]* in line 10'.

15': Restored after RIMB 2, 6.32.19, l. 32 and identical passages in other inscriptions.

* * *

One final question needs to be addressed: Where was the cylinder fragment published in this article actually found? There is no question that the object was meant to be buried in the foundations or walls of the É-dim-gal-kalam-ma temple in Der. But since Tell 'Aqar, the site of the ancient city of Der, was never excavated and only very few texts were reportedly found there, it may well come from elsewhere. The 1935 entry on the fragment in the inventory book of the Yale Babylonian Collection provides no clues that might help to determine its findspot, so we have to content ourselves with some speculative thoughts.

Yale houses very few texts from Assyria, which makes it rather unlikely that YBC 2368 was found, for instance, at Nineveh, even though it cannot be excluded that its master-copy was written there.⁴⁴ We know that an Assurbanipal cylinder inscription recording work on the Eanna temple in Uruk was found in Babylon,⁴⁵ and one possibility is that our cylinder originates from there. More probable, however, is that the cylinder's findspot was Uruk. First, this is the origin of thousands of tablets and inscriptions acquired by Yale and housed in the Yale Babylonian Collection. And second, there is evidence for a rather intensive cultural exchange between the ancient cities of Der and Uruk.⁴⁶ Six scholarly tablets from the Late Babylonian period bear colophons according to which they were written in Der, but at least two of them, and probably all six, were unearthed in Uruk.⁴⁷ The two found in

⁴⁴ See our earlier discussion of the letter SAA 15 4 from the reign of Sargon II. It mentions a master-text sent from Assyria to Der that was supposed to serve as a model for royal inscriptions destined to be placed in the temple of that city. For a discussion of the process of producing Assyrian royal inscriptions, see most recently Frahm 2003: 157–160.

⁴⁵ See RIMB 2, 6.32.19, commentary.

⁴⁶ The close relationship between the two cities may go back to very early times, but the relevant evidence has been contested; see Michalowski 1977.

⁴⁷ See Oelsner 1995; Frahm 2002: 95.

regular excavations, SpTU 4 125 and 185, come from the library of Iqišaya, a well-known Uruk exorcist who was active in the early Hellenistic period. The colophon of SpTU 4 185 mentions that the scribe of the tablet had originally deposited it in the northern wing of the É-dim-gal-kalam-ma in Der,⁴⁸ from where it must have been transferred at some later point in time to Uruk. It is possible, even though such a scenario remains entirely hypothetical, that our cylinder had at first likewise been housed in Anu rabû's temple in Der, but was then brought to the south with the other tablets that eventually found their way to Uruk. The scholars of Uruk might have been interested in the text because Assurbanipal's qualities as a learned king and patron of the scribes were still remembered in Late Babylonian times,⁴⁹ and because the names of Der's principal god, Anu rabû and Ištaran, resembled those of their own main deities, Anu and Ištar.

⁴⁸ *ina* É IM. 'SI.SÁ' [0?] 'é-dim-gal-kalam'-ma É UMUN²-ti-šú ú-ki-in "he deposited it in the northern building [0?] of É-dim-gal-kalam-ma, his (Anu-rabû's) lordly temple" (SpTU 4 185 r.13'); the same statement can be found in the colophon of the so-called "Converse tablet," see Oelsner 1995: 267.

⁴⁹ See Frame & George 2005. Note that SpTU 2 31 is a later copy of an Assurbanipal inscription, while SpTU 2 46 is an original tablet from Assurbanipal's library in Nineveh. Both tablets were found in Uruk in Ue XVIII 1, layer II, which is associated with Iqišaya, see Frahm 2002: 97–98.