

The Building Activities of Shalmaneser I in Northern Mesopotamia

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The Middle Assyrian period reached its military height in the thirteenth century B.C. with the successive reigns of Adad-nārārī I, Shalmaneser I, and Tukultī-Ninurta I. Each of these monarchs was an energetic campaigner who consolidated and expanded Assyria's sphere of control. This period of military expansion and political stability was paralleled by, or found expression in, a proliferation of royal inscriptions attesting to the power and majesty of these sovereigns. Royal inscriptions suddenly become numerous, more detailed, and much longer. With regard to Shalmaneser I, king of Assyria from 1273 to 1244, his inscriptions tell of his defeat of eight lands and fifty-one cities in mountainous Uruatri to the north, his conquest of the city Arinu and the land of Mušri, and his victory over Šattuara, king of Ḫanigalbat, and the latter's Hittite and Aḫlamû allies, in the west. Finally, we learn of his claim to have defeated the Qutû to the east.¹ Babylonia, to the south, was left to await the attention of his son and successor Tukultī-Ninurta I. Of course, it was Shalmaneser's victory over the remnants of the Mitannian empire that was the most important event of his reign. The Assyrian monarch states that besides capturing Šattuara's capital and nine fortified cult centres he destroyed 180 cities and conquered as far as Carchemish on the upper Euphrates.² Prosperity resulting from Assyria's control over this area and the trade routes running through it may have permitted or encouraged the ambitious building programme carried out in Assyria during Shalmaneser's reign, a building programme attested in the royal inscriptions. The inscriptions of Shalmaneser I were first gathered together and edited over fifty years ago;³ the basis of this article comes from work done while re-editing these texts for the Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia project.⁴

Almost all of Adad-nārārī's extensive building projects appear to have been undertaken in the city Aššur;⁵ his son's, however, were more spread out through the land.

Texts from Aššur and Nineveh record Shalmaneser's work. With regard to Aššur (modern Qalat Shergat), the most important work was carried out on the Eḫur-sagkurkurra, the temple of the god Aššur. Shalmaneser tells how this temple had been destroyed in a fire 580 years after its previous restoration by Šamši-Adad I. 'The temple, its sanctuary, the chapels, the shrines (?), daises, cultic chairs, stools, all the property of the temple of Aššur, my lord, burnt in the fire.' Shalmaneser had the debris cleared away and rebuilt the temple with due ritual. The forecourts of the gods Nunnamnir and Aššur were increased in size; tower-gates were constructed, as was the chapel of the divine judges. In addition, the old house of the beer vats was torn down and rebuilt. Reference is also made to work on, or the construction of, bronze doors, stair walls, and architraves with friezes.⁶ A number of these restorations can be identified archaeologically.⁷

The temple of the Assyrian Ištar was also the recipient of attention by Shalmaneser. It had previously been built/rebuilt by Ilu-šuma, Sargon I, Puzur-Aššur III, and Adad-nārārī I, and Shalmaneser merely restored its weaker portions.⁸ In this temple were found gold and silver tablets of Shalmaneser I and Tukultī-Ninurta I recording work on the ancient temple of Ninuaittu/Nunaittu ('The Ninevite Goddess'). Tukultī-Ninurta claims to have finished the work begun by his father, by completing the wall, installing the beams and doors, and erecting the dais.⁹

Shalmaneser may also have built a temple to the god Nabû in Aššur. The evidence for this is a statement by the king Sin-šarra-iškun, who reigned about six and a half centuries later, that the temple of Nabû there had been built by a ruler by the name of Shalmaneser who had reigned, presumably, before Ashurnasirpal II.¹⁰ Since Shalmaneser II who reigned in the eleventh century is practically a nonentity, it seems likely that Shalmaneser I was meant.

* V. Donbaz is primarily responsible for the copy and G. Frame for the study. The study is a revised version of a paper presented by the latter to the Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale, London, July 1982.

1 Grayson, ARI 1, §§527–32.

2 Ibid., §§530–1.

3 Weidner, IAK.

4 A project sponsored by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

5 Of Adad-nārārī's royal inscriptions, only two deal with construction work at a site other than Aššur. These two refer to activity at the town of Taidu (Grayson, ARI 1, §§394 and 398), which may have been located on the upper Habur River (see Nashef, Rép.

Géogr. 5, pp. 256–7); both inscriptions, however, were found at Aššur.

6 Grayson, ARI 1, §§534–5, 544, 550, and 557–8. Work on the temple of Enlil described *ibid.*, §572, may well refer to work carried out on a part of the temple of Aššur (see Borger, EAK 1, p. 16). See also Grayson, ARI 1, §631, which refers to structures in a courtyard which would have lain in or near the temple of Aššur (see Menzel, Tempel, p. 51).

7 Among others, see van Driel, Aššur, pp. 15–19.

8 Grayson, ARI 1, §585.

9 Ibid., §§591 and 757.

10 Böhl, Leiden Coll. 3, p. 35 lines 22–24 and see Menzel, Tempel, p. 74.

ES. 9512



With regard to secular architecture at Aššur, Shalmaneser states that he rebuilt part of his father's palace.¹¹ Numerous bricks from Aššur bear inscriptions assigning them to the palace of Shalmaneser;¹² perhaps the same structure was meant. Shalmaneser also reconstructed the Libūr-šalḫu gate which had become dilapidated.¹³

At Nineveh (ancient Ninua), Shalmaneser's attention was directed to the Emašmaš, the temple of the goddess Ištar, the Lady-of-Nineveh. The temple and its ziggurat were in ruins as the result of damage caused by an earthquake which had occurred at some point after the complex's last restoration by Aššur-uballit I; Shalmaneser claims to have rebuilt both the temple and the ziggurat from top to bottom. Numerous inscribed bricks, clay cones, and bowl rims attest to this work.¹⁴

A third site at which Shalmaneser is supposed to have been active is Nimrud (ancient Calah). Our information, however, is second-hand. Ashurnasirpal II, when recording his elevation of the town to the position of Assyria's capital, said that the ancient city of Calah had been built by 'Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, a prince who preceded me.'¹⁵ Again, since we know little about Shalmaneser II, it has generally been assumed that Ashurnasirpal was referring to Shalmaneser I. Textually the city is first attested in the thirteenth century, certainly in the reign of Tukultī-Ninurta and possibly earlier, in the reign of Shalmaneser. Archaeologically, remains from the Middle-Assyrian period have been identified.¹⁶

Thus, to the present time, we have been able to credit Shalmaneser I with activity at several sites within the city of Aššur (based upon contemporary textual evidence and supported by archaeological evidence), at the temple of Ištar at Nineveh (based upon contemporary textual evidence), and at Nimrud (based upon non-contemporary textual evidence).

Evidence for additional building projects carried out by Shalmaneser I is found on a large inscribed alabaster slab found at Aššur and now in the collection of the Ancient Orient Museum in Istanbul. The piece bears the excavation number Ass 17313 and has the museum number EŠ 9512. It measures 35.8 × 32.7 × 7.1 cm and comes from the main court of the Aššur temple (i B 3 III). The text is poorly preserved and has been heavily coated with dirt; the bottom portion of the slab is missing. Weidner identified the text from the excavation photographs (Ass 5148–5152) and used the piece as one of eighteen exemplars for the main inscription of Shalmaneser which records work on the temple of the god Aššur at Aššur.¹⁷ He noted, however, that this exemplar had an additional passage inserted after the

record of the king's military campaigns and before a section giving the king's genealogy. Since Weidner was only working from the photographs and since the relevant passage was largely covered with dirt, he could recognize only a few words, but they were sufficient for him to determine that the passage was an additional and extensive building report.¹⁸ The alabaster slab was located and cleaned by the authors of the present article in 1981.

The passage of interest is found on the third column (the first column of the reverse). Unfortunately, the beginning of the column is lost; when we can begin to identify signs we are already in the additional section. It is difficult to determine how much additional material is likely to be missing. If none of the main inscription was omitted there could have been room for very little more. As it is preserved, the added passage is twenty-two lines long and reads as follows:

iii Lacuna

- 1') x [.]
 - 2') i-'na' [.]
 - 3') ù 'BÀD(?)'-šu x [.]
 - 4') ^dU.GUR EN-i[a(?)]
 - 5') lu ú-ša-ši-x [x x x (x)]
 - 6') É ^dINNIN NIN-i[a x x x (x)]
 - 7') ú-di-iš si-qur-r[a-ta |su (x x)]
 - 8') É el-la šu-bat né-eḫ-t[i x (x)]
 - 9') a-'na' ^dINNIN NIN URU.tal-m[u-še]
 - 10') i-na qé-reb URU.tal-mu-še lu x [(x x)]
 - 11') é-gašan-kalam-ma É ^dINNIN NIN URU.'ar'-[ba-il(?)]
 - 12') NIN-ia ù si-qur-ra-su e-pu-uš
 - 13') si-qur-ra-ta GAL-ta a-na ^daš-šur
 - 14') EN-ia i-na qé-reb URU-ia ^daš-šur
 - 15') e-pu-uš É ^dIŠKUR šá URU.'ka(?)'-ḫat
 - 16') 'ù' ^dIŠKUR ša URU.i-sa-ni EN.MEŠ-ia
 - 17') lu-ú e-pu-uš ma-ḫa-zi
 - 18') É.KUR.MEŠ ša-tu-nu el šá pa-na
 - 19') ú-ša-te-er iš-tu uš-še-šu-nu
 - 20') a-di gaba-dib-bi-šu-nu ab-ni
 - 21') ta-ši-la-ti-šu-nu e-pu-uš
 - 22') ù na-ri-ia aš-ku-un re-ú 'ki'-nu
- etc.

1'–5') in and its wall(?) . . . the god Nergal, my(?) lord, I

5'–12') I restored . . . the temple of the goddess Ištar, my lady, . . . [I built(?) the/its] ziggurat, (. . .) the holy temple, the secure dwelling, (. . .) for the goddess Ištar, the Lady-of-Talmuššu, inside the city Talmuššu. I built Egašankamma, the temple of the goddess Ištar, the Lady-of-Arbela(?), my lady, and its ziggurat.

11 Grayson, ARI 1, §§620 and 624.

12 Ibid., §§653 and 656.

13 Ibid., §613. The location of this gate is uncertain (see Weidner, IAK p. 151 n. 12).

14 Grayson, ARI 1, §§595, 601, 609, 668, and 671.

15 Ibid., 2, §§591, 619, 653, and 671.

16 See RLA 5, p. 320.

17 Weidner, IAK XXI, 1; ES 9512 (Ass 17313) is exemplar N. This exemplar apparently did not give the date of composition; other exemplars used by Weidner were dated in the month Ša sarrāte of the eponymies of Mušallim-Aššur and Aššur-nādin-šumē (see ibid., p. 126).

18 Ibid., p. xxxii sub XXI I N and p. 120 variant l.

13'–15') I (re)built the great ziggurat inside my city Aššur for the god Aššur, my lord.

15'–17') I built the temple of the god Adad of Kaḥat(?) and the god Adad of Isana, my lords.

17'–22') I made these sanctuaries (and) temples greater than before; I built them from top to bottom. I made them splendid and set up my stele.

22'ff.) The faithful shepherd . . .

As the concluding section (lines 17'–22') makes clear, this passage is a summary account of sundry building projects which were carried out for several Mesopotamian deities in various cities of Shalmaneser's realm.

Commentary

1'–5') Very little can be read in the first five lines of the passage, but in view of the clear reference to the god Nergal in line 4', it is likely that something was being done for this god. The verb used in line 5' is different from those employed later in order to refer to the building of temples (*edēšu* in line 7' and *epēšu* in lines 12', 15', and 17'). Thus it is not clear exactly what is being described. Based upon what is preserved of the verb, one expects *ušāšib* (see Weidner, Tn. no. 13:28) or *ušaršid*; but the traces support neither reading.¹⁹ Whatever was being described could presumably be subsumed under the final summary section (17'–22'), which deals with the building of religious edifices.

If one accepts the idea that Shalmaneser was claiming to have carried out some building project for the god Nergal, the question arises as to where any such activity would have been carried out. As one can see from Weiher's study,²⁰ the cult of Nergal is not well attested in Assyria. This god does receive a brief mention in one royal inscription from each of the kings Šamši-Adad I, Adad-nārārī I, and Tukultī-Ninurta I. The last-mentioned king claims to have built a temple for several gods, including Nergal, in Kār-Tukultī-Ninurta, but this city was not yet in existence in the time of Shalmaneser. Beginning with Adad-nārārī II in the early Neo-Assyrian period, Nergal appears more frequently in Assyrian royal inscriptions, but usually in connection with hunting.²¹ The only city in Assyria for which a real cult of Nergal is attested is Tarbišu, the modern Sherif-Khan, located a little up-river from

Nineveh. The earliest reference to this city is found in a chronicle dealing with the time of Arik-dēn-ili, that is at the end of the fourteenth century, but the cult of Nergal is not attested there until the reign of Shalmaneser III in the ninth century. Two inscribed mace heads state that they were dedicated to the god Nergal 'who resides in Tarbišu' by Shalmaneser III. An actual temple is not attested until the reign of Sennacherib, although an as yet unpublished text of that king found by the Mosul University expedition to Sherif-Khan is said to state that Sargon II had previously built a temple of Nergal there.²² Geographically, the site of Tarbišu fits into the area in which Shalmaneser is known to have worked (see above). Is it thus possible that in our text Shalmaneser I was claiming to have done some work at Tarbišu? In view of the damaged condition of the text any such suggestion is only speculation.

5'–12') This section records work done for the goddess Ištar at two or three different sites. In lines 5'–7' reference is made to the restoration of a temple of Ištar and lines 7'–10' deal with the ziggurat of Ištar, the Lady-of-Talmuššu, at Talmuššu. The connection between these two parts is not certain. The ziggurat may have been part of the temple (complex) described in 5'–7'; if this was the case, we should probably read *si-qur-r[a-su]* 'its ziggurat' at the end of 7'.

Neo-Assyrian texts show that Talmuššu (Neo-Assyrian Talmusu)²³ was located to the north of Nineveh. On the basis of a reference in Sennacherib's inscription dealing with the construction of aqueducts to bring water to Nineveh, Jacobsen has proposed the site of modern Jerahiyah for the site of the ancient city. This town is located about twenty-five miles north of Nineveh on a tributary of the Khosr River.²⁴ That there was a cult of Ištar of Talmuššu is known from other sources. In Schroeder, KAV no. 72, a (Middle) Assyrian god list, Ištar of Nineveh is followed by Ištar of Talmuššu (rev. [?] 10–11). Also of interest is KUB 44 15, a Hittite ritual text, possibly dating to the fourteenth century, where we find a connection between Ištar, Nineveh, and Talmuššu; apparently Talmuššu was considered to be a relative by marriage of the goddess Ištar.²⁵

The building of the temple of the goddess Ištar of Arbela and its ziggurat is described in lines 11'–12'. The reading of the city name at the end of line 11' as Arbela is supported by the fact that the name of the temple of

19 One might also consider the verb *našû* (see CAD 11/2 (N), p. 109), in which case the traces at the end of the line could be those of a pronomial suffix (*-š[u]* or *-š[u-nu]*).

20 von Weiher, Nergal. See especially pp. 99–103.

21 For references, see *ibid.*, p. 99 n. 2, and Grayson, ARI 1, §130.

22 See Curtis and Grayson, Iraq 44 (1982), pp. 87–94 and pl. III, and Menzel, Tempel pp. 125–6. To a lesser extent, cults of Nergal are attested at Nimrud, Hubšal (see the references cited Menzel, Tempel, Index p. 4), and Nuzi (see von Weiher, Nergal p. 90). A temple of Nergal dated to the reign of Ashurbanipal has recently been discovered in the Himrin basin at Tell Haddad (see Hannoun, BSMS 2 [1982] pp. 5–6).

23 For the reading of the name, see the references given in Kessler, Nordmesopotamien p. 17 n. 87 and p. 94 n. 356, and Kessler, ZA

69 (1979), p. 220. The Middle Assyrian occurrences of the name may be found in Nashef, Rép. Géogr. 5, p. 258.

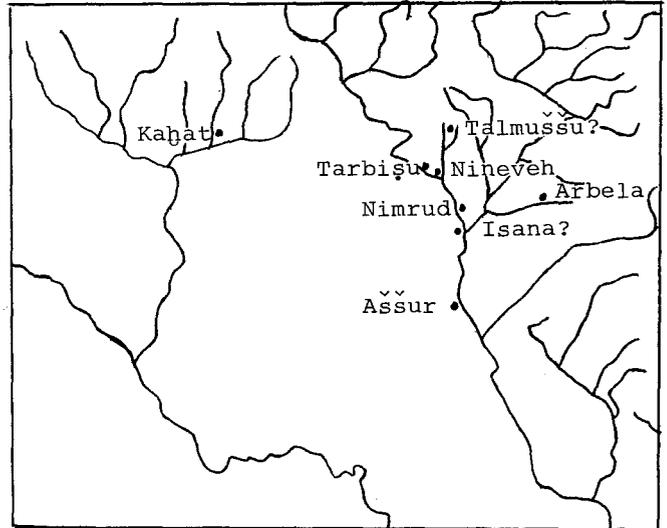
24 Jacobsen, Jerwan p. 39 and fig. 9. Groneberg (Rép. Géogr. 3, p. 233) states that according to Kessler the Middle Assyrian city by this name is not identical with the Neo-Assyrian city by the same name. However, the cited work by Kessler does not deal with this matter. See also Nashef, Rép. Géogr. 5, p. 258.

25 Güterbock tentatively translates obv. 12'–14' as follows: 'Eat, oh Ištar, queen of Nineveh! But of Talmuššiya, you are the bride/daughter-in-law (SAL.É.GE₄-aš). You for whom the city Nineveh is father but Talmuššiya is your relative-by-marriage . . .' (Private communication; this tentative interpretation is based on emendations of the apparently corrupt text. For another translation, see Archi, Oriens Antiquus 16 [1977] 304.)

Ištar at Arbela during the Neo-Assyrian period is known to have been Egašankalamma.²⁶ In Middle Assyrian texts, the city name could be written either *ar-ba-il* or 4-DINGIR.²⁷ Arbela (modern Erbil; Middle Assyrian Arba-il) is located about forty miles east of Nimrud and is mentioned in texts from as early as the time of the Third Dynasty of Ur.²⁸ While best known during the seventh century, the cult of Ištar of Arbela is attested already in the twelfth century, in the time of Ninurta-tukultī-Aššur.²⁹

13'–15') This section contains the first explicit claim by Shalmaneser to have done work on the ziggurat of the god Aššur at Aššur although several gold and silver discs have been found at that city which bear inscriptions stating that they were the property of the ziggurat and that they had been dedicated to the god by Shalmaneser.³⁰

15'–17') In these lines work is mentioned on the temple (temples?) of the god Adad of the city Kaḫat(?) and the god Adad of the city Isana. The city name at the end of line 15' is likely to be read Kaḫat, although the first sign is a better SAG than KA. Kaḫat (modern Tell Barrī) is situated about seven miles north-east of Tell Brak on the east bank of the Jagiag River and was one of the important Mitannian cities conquered by Adad-nārārī I.³¹ Although there is no other evidence for a cult of Adad at Kaḫat, this site was connected with the Hurrian weather-god Tešub, who could be identified with Adad.³² Isana is attested fairly frequently in Assyrian texts and Forrer placed it to the west of the Tigris somewhere north of Aššur.³³ In his recent entry for Isana in the Reallexikon der Assyriologie, Postgate refers to an unpublished text connecting Isana with the transport of logs by river and suggests that the city may be identified with the modern town of Senn, which is located on the west bank of the Tigris opposite the confluence of the Tigris and Upper Zab rivers.³⁴ Apart from the text published here, Isana is first clearly attested in an economic document from the reign of Ninurta-tukultī-Aššur in the second half of the twelfth century.³⁵ Freydanck, VAS 19 51, a text apparently dating to around the reign of Ninurta-tukultī-Aššur, mentions in the first line the *rimki ša Adad ša URU. [x]-x-na*.³⁶ The spacing would fit a restoration [*i-s*]a-na, but the trace preserved before the NA does not fit the end of a good SA sign.³⁷ There is no other evidence for a cult of Adad of/at Isana. Since lines 15'–17' do not state



where the temple or temples being built were located, it remains uncertain whether it was at Kaḫat, Isana, both of these places, or possibly Aššur, where the previously mentioned project was carried out (lines 13'–15').

17'–22') It is also possible to translate this section '... the sanctuaries of these temples ...' The use of the term *māḫāzī* in this summation of the preceding lines reminds one of the epithet frequently used by Shalmaneser, *mukīn māḫāzī ellūti* 'the one who established the sacred cult centres/sanctuaries,' an epithet not used by any other Assyrian monarch.³⁸

22'ff.) From this point on EŠ 9512 again duplicates the main inscription (see IAK p. 120 iii 27ff.).

This text shows that Shalmaneser's building programme was more extensive than has been previously recognized and included work at Aššur, Nineveh, Talmuššu, probably Arbela and Nimrud, and possibly Tarbišū, Kaḫat and Isana. Because of the damaged condition of the text, it is not clear if these cities were being mentioned in some geographical order or not; with the exception of Kaḫat, all of them were located within the Assyrian heartland. It is not surprising that Shalmaneser I, an energetic ruler, would have carried out construction work throughout his land in order to help commemorate his military successes, and we are fortunate to have numerous texts recounting his actions.

26 See Menzel, Tempel pp. 6–7.

27 See Nashef, Rép. Géogr. 5, p. 36.

28 See Edzard and Farber, Rép. Géogr. 2, pp. 217–18.

29 Donbaz, Ninurta-tukultī-Aššur pl. 18 A.3187:6.

30 Grayson, ARI 1, §§672–4.

31 For the Middle Assyrian references to this city, see Nashef, Rép. Géogr. 5, pp. 146–7.

32 See Falkner, AfO 18 (1957–8), p. 16, sub. 5 and King, CT 25, pl. 16:18.

33 Forrer, Provinz. p. 12.

34 RLA 5, p. 173.

35 Donbaz, Ninurta-tukultī-Aššur pl. 1 A.113:1. The Middle Assyrian attestations of the city maybe found in Nashef, Rép. Géogr. 5, pp. 139–40.

36 Reference courtesy of Kh. Nashef. For the dates of the eponym officials appearing in this text, see Saporetti, Eponimi p. 146.

37 Other possible restorations include Karana, Guzana, Sikana, and Zarana. Karana is probably to be identified with Tell al Rimah, located about forty miles south-west of Nineveh. It is attested during the reign of Shalmaneser I and may have had a temple and ziggurat dedicated to Adad (see RLA 5, pp. 405–7). The cult of Adad is also attested at Guzana and Sikana (see Abou-Assaf, Bordreuil, and Millard, La statue de Tell Fekheriyet et son inscription bilingue assyro-araméenne [Editions Recherche sur les civilisations, cahier 7; Paris, 1982], pp. 61–2 and 64, and Menzel, Tempel pp. 85–6). These cities lay outside the Assyrian heartland, but within the area conquered by Shalmaneser.

38 See Seux, Épithètes p. 133. Adad-nārārī I and Shalmaneser I also used the epithet *mukīn māḫāzī* (ibid., p. 132).