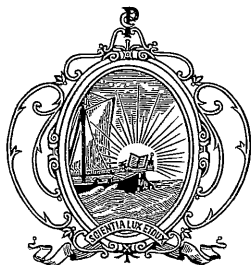


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ANALECTA

65

IMMIGRATION AND EMIGRATION  
WITHIN THE  
ANCIENT NEAR EAST  
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## ASSYRO-ARAMAICA: THE ASSYRIAN LION-WEIGHTS

The Assyrian weights in the shape of bronze statuettes of crouching lions in the British Museum — sixteen in number, most of which present complete or fragmentary bilingual cuneiform and alphabetic inscriptions — have been known to Assyriologists and Aramaists alike since Layard described their discovery as a group under a bull colossus in the throne-room of Ashurnasirpal's NW Palace at Nimrud a century and a half ago<sup>1</sup>. On the Assyriological side of things, particular attention has been devoted to the actual weight of these objects as compared to the value declared on the inscriptions<sup>2</sup>: thus the lion-weights have brought a decided contribution to knowledge of the Assyrian weight-system, specifically during the 8th-7th centuries B.C.<sup>3</sup>. As for the cuneiform inscriptions themselves, their republication in modern form is still awaited<sup>4</sup>.

On the side of the Aramaic epigraphs, after the *editio princeps* in a further work by Layard<sup>5</sup> and a flourish of early publications<sup>6</sup>, these texts

<sup>1</sup> A.H. LAYARD, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, London 1849, p. 128: upon raising a huge "winged human-headed bull of yellow limestone ... I ... discovered under it sixteen copper lions, admirably designed, and forming a regular series, diminishing in size from the largest, which was above one foot in length, to the smallest, which scarcely exceeded an inch. To their backs was affixed a ring, giving them the appearance of weights". As pointed out by T.C. MITCHELL (cf. fn. 10, below), the *lamassu* in question is portrayed in a drawing *ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> The paramount study is the one by F. WEISSBACH, *ZDMG* 61 (1907), p. 379ff and 948ff, especially 394-402.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. J.N. POSTGATE, *Fifty Neo-Assyrian Legal Documents*, Warminster 1976, p. 64-65, for an overview; and, more recently, M.A. POWELL, *RIA* 7, Berlin-New York 1987-1990, s.v. *Masse und Gewichte*, p. 457 ff. and esp. 515-516.

<sup>4</sup> The most recent discussion on these minor but not unimportant Assyrian royal inscriptions would seem to go back to W. SCHRAMM, *EAK* II, Leiden 1973, p. 138ff.

<sup>5</sup> A.H. LAYARD, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*, London 1853, p. 601-602 and esp. plate facing p. 601. This edition presents the copies of the Aramaic and Assyrian texts, with a table of the comparative weights: a range of information which one has difficulty in putting together through later studies.

<sup>6</sup> Essentially, DE VOGÜE's edition in *CIS* II/1, Paris 1888, Tab. I-II, nos. 1-16; SINA SCHIFFER's transliterations in *Die Aramäer*, Leipzig 1911, p. 174-177; etc. Notice that in *CIS*, the material was said to come from "Ninive": and through this publication, the error in provenance was transmitted all down the line of Aramaic studies, creeping into the catalogues of Vattioni (see fn. 5, below), in the classification by Naveh (see fn. 6, below), and most astonishingly in the major bibliography of Aramaic studies recently edited by J.A. FITZMYER and S.A. KAUFMAN (see next footnote).

have been generally absent from recent crestomathies<sup>7</sup> or presentations of Aramaic epigraphy<sup>8</sup>, although contributions on aspects of detail — from paleography to philological particularities — have not been entirely lacking<sup>9</sup>.

In very recent years, T.C. Mitchell finally set the lion-weights in their archaeological and technical context, laying out a brief but complete catalogue of the British Museum pieces<sup>10</sup>. In his accompanying remarks, Mitchell studied the series as a whole, seeking out context and function of this group of palace weights: his main conclusions seem to be that while the 16 lions formed a full set of weight-standards between 1 and 20 minas, the lack of uniformity in style and date of some of the pieces indicate that the group as discovered was the result of an admixture of more than one set of pieces<sup>11</sup>.

Mitchell also dealt with the inscriptions engraved on the pieces, presenting both the Akkadian and Aramaic texts in brief form, and indicating the location of the epigraphs on the statuettes. Now, while Mitchell's presentation is quite satisfactory<sup>12</sup>, I believe that these extraordinary and rare bilingual pieces from 8th and 7th century Assyria deserve at least one more glance in their purely epigraphical aspect and in their inscribed messages before we can lay them scientifically to rest. This article will thus be concerned with a new presentation of the texts (especially Aramaic, but also Akkadian) on the basis of hand-copies which

<sup>7</sup> From the bibliographical data provided in J.A. FITZMYER-S.A. KAUFMAN, *An Aramaic Bibliography, Part I: Old, Official and Biblical Aramaic*, Baltimore-London 1992, p. 37, B.2.4., s.v. *Nineveh* (sic, see previous footnote) *Lion Weights* we learn that J.J. KOOPMANS, *Aramäische Chrestomathie*, Leiden 1962, was the last of such publications to reproduce the inscribed lion-weights (ad no. 13, pp. 79-80, three examples are given).

<sup>8</sup> For some reason, F. VATTIONI's transliteration and translation of all the lion-weights of 1971 (*Augustinianum* 11, p. 175-177) is omitted in *An Aramaic Bibliography, loc. cit.*, as well as in the abundant bibliography which accompanies T.C. MITCHELL's catalogue (see fn. 10, below).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. e.g. J. NAVEH, *The Development of the Aramaic Script*, Jerusalem 1971, p. 11, on the dating of the texts or R. DEGEN, *NESE* 3 (1978), p. 11-14, on some names of numbers on the weights.

<sup>10</sup> T.C. MITCHELL, *The Bronze Lion Weights from Nimrud*, in *Res Orientales* 2 (1990), p. 129-138. I am indebted to colleagues F. ISRAEL and H. LOZACHMEUR for kindly bringing this article to my attention.

<sup>11</sup> *Art. cit.* (n. 10), p. 136-137.

<sup>12</sup> MITCHELL also gives photographs of ten lion-weights of the group in *ibid.*, 133; the pieces are side by side and photographed from above, to show their relative sizes. A recently renewed interest in the lion-weights is also witnessed by the fine set of photographs of the pieces provided in vol. VI of the text-edition *State Archives of Assyria*, i.e. T. KWASMAN-S. PARPOLA, *Legal Transactions of the Royal Court of Nineveh, Part I*, Helsinki 1991 (hereafter SAA VI).

I made some years ago at the British Museum<sup>13</sup>; to the transliterations and translations, I have added notes on some terms and expressions and a brief discussion of the implication of the objects and their texts<sup>14</sup>.

1) BM 91220. Layard, no. 1 = *CIS* II/1, 1 = Mitchell, no. 1  
Bronze lion-weight. Style of statuette: group A<sup>15</sup>. Size: 28,6x14,7 cms.  
Weight: 14,934 Kgs. Photo of piece: Mitchell p. 133, top; *SAA* VI, p. XXIV, fig. 3b; p. XXV, fig. 4a, left. Photo of text: *CIS* II/1, tab. I. Copy: fig. 1.

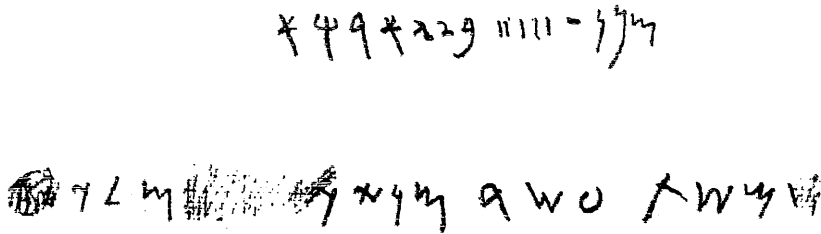


Fig. 1

1. (on right flank) *mnn XV b zy 'rq'*
2. (on base, right) *'h'mšt 'šr mnyn [b' zy] mlk[()]*
3. (on left flank) *|||||*

“Minas, 15 by (the standard) of the land; fifteen minas *of the king*”  
15 vertical Strokes

**Notes.** In l. 2, Layard has nothing after *'šr mn'*?<sup>1</sup>. Notice also the perplexities on the presence of *b* before *zy* in the lacuna in *DISO*, p. 158, s.v. *mnh*<sup>11</sup>. As will be stated in the *Discussion*, below, there are contextual reasons as well to rule out the presence of *b zy* here.

<sup>13</sup> All thanks are owed to the Trustees of the British Museum and to Dr. MITCHELL himself, at the time Director of the Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities, as well as to the present director, Dr. John CURTIS, for kindly allowing me to copy the inscriptions on the lion-weights. I am also indebted to Dr. CURTIS in his capacity as specialist of ancient Near Eastern bronzework, for kind advice on matters metallurgical and metrological.

<sup>14</sup> The Roman numerals in the transliterations are intended to render the numbering given within the Aramaic text, formed of distinct numerals for tens (horizontal strokes) and units (vertical strokes), and distinct as such from the more “pictorial” and “extra-linguistic” series of more crude vertical strokes which accompanies the texts: see the copies for the two types of enumeration.

<sup>15</sup> As defined by MITCHELL (*op. cit.* (n. 10), p. 135b), group A statuettes present “Bow handle, well depicted face, gaping jaws with sharp teeth, layed-back ears, mane of tongue-like knobs, tail forward over right haunch, sheet base squared at front, rounded at rear”.

2) BM 91221. Layard no. 2 = CIS II/1,2 = Mitchell, no. 2

Bronze lion-weight. Style: group A. Size: 19,1 x 10,2 cms. Weight: 5,043 Kgs. Photo of piece: Mitchell p. 133, top; SAA VI, p. XXIV, fig. 3c, 4a (2nd from left); CIS II/1, tab. I, center page. Photo of text: CIS II/1, tab. I. Copy: fig. 2.

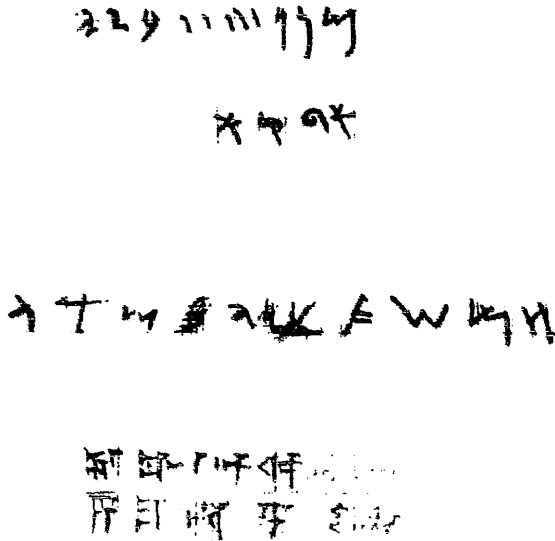


Fig. 2

1. (on right flank) *mnn* V *b zy l 'rq'*
2. (on right base) *hmšt 'z'y mlk*
3. É.GAL <sup>1</sup>dšùl-[*man*-MAŠ MAN KUR AŠ]  
5 MA.NA šá 'MAN'
4. (on left flank bottom) /////

“(Aram.) Minas, 5 by (the standard) of the land; five (minas) of the king”  
“(Akk.) Palace of Shalmaneser, *king of Assyria*; 5 minas of the king”.  
5 vertical strokes

**Notes.** The numeral ends clearly with a *-t*, in agreement with the conclusions reached by Degen, *NESE* 3 (1978), 11-14. Pace Vattioni, *cit.*, 175,12, (*hmšh m[n]y mlk*), and Mitchell (*hmšt mny mlk*), only one sign seems to precede the *-y*, in agreement with the copy by Layard and with *CIS*: a sort of elongated *z* marred by scratches, possibly conditioned by the very thin surface on which the engraved texts were to be fitted<sup>16</sup>. In

<sup>16</sup> MITCHELL (*op. cit.* (n. 10), p. 136) suggests that the inscriptions on the bases could have been added after the casting with the *cire perdue* method.

fact, a construct-state plural would seem to be entirely ruled out in these texts, on the basis of the clear attestation of a plural followed by *zy* in no. 4.

3) BM 91226. Layard no. 3 = *CIS* II/1, 3 = Mitchell, no. 3  
Bronze lion-weight. Style: group A (handle missing). Size: 15,2 x 8,6 cms. Weight: 2,865 Kgs. Photo of piece: Mitchell p. 133, top; *SAA* VI, p. XXV, fig. 4b. Photo of text: *CIS* II/1, tab. I. Copy: fig. 3.

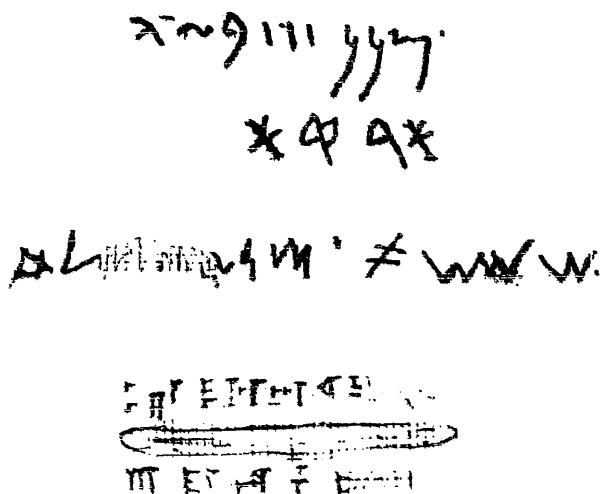


Fig. 3

1. (on right flank) *mnn* III *b zy l'rq'*
2. (on base, right) *šlšt mny[n zy m]lk*
3. (left flank) *///*
4. (on back) É.GAL <sup>1.d</sup>Šùl-ma[-nu-MAŠ MAN KUR AŠ]  
3 MA.NA šá LUG[AL]

“(Aram.) Minas: 3 by (the standard) of the land; three minas of the king”.

3 vertical strokes

“(Akk.) Palace of Shalmaneser, king of Assyria; 3 minas of the king”.

**Notes.** The last sign of the numeral in line 2 is again *-t*, with Degen, *loc. cit.*. As for the suggested integration, which contrasts with Mitchell’s *mn[y.mlk]*, although the space for four letters in the break is admittedly small, perhaps a ligature of signs was present here, as in no. 4:2.

4) BM 91222. Layard no. 4 = *CIS* II/1, 4 = Mitchell, no. 4  
Bronze lion-weight. Style: group A. Size: 13,3 x 8,9 cms. Weight:  
1,992 Kgs. Photo of piece: Mitchell p. 133, top; SAA VI, p. XXV, fig.  
4a. Photo of text: *CIS* II/1, tab. I. Copy: fig. 4.

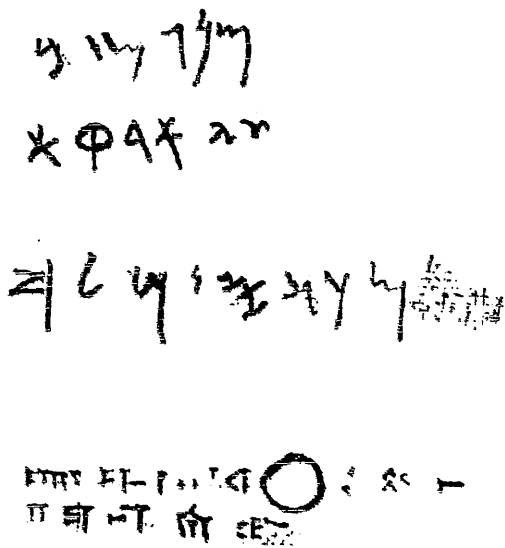


Fig. 4

1. (on right flank) *mnn* (scratch) II *b* / *zy*'*rq*'
2. (on base, right) [()] *mn* *y+n*' *zy* *mlk*
3. (left flank) //
4. (on back) É.GAL <sup>1.d.</sup>Šùl[-*man*-MAŠ] MAN KUR AŠ  
2 MA.NA šá LUG[AL]

“(Aram.) Minas: 2 by (the standard) of the land. Two minas of the king”  
2 vertical strokes

”(Akk.) Palace of Shalmaneser, king of Assyria; 2 minas of the king”

**Notes.** In 1. 2, the beginning is worn, but there are no visible traces of writing, as also borne out by *CIS*, prior to the *m*-; thus Vattioni’s restoration as [*tryn*] *mn*[*yn*] (*loc. cit.*, 176) is untenable; and Mitchell’s [...*mn*]*yn* is exceedingly pessimistic. For the possibility of expressing double quantities with the use of the dual of the counted object, see possibly *šqlyn II* in an unpublished triangular silver loan from Neo-Assyrian Assur<sup>17</sup>. The reading

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in V. HUG, *Altaramäische Grammatik der Texte des 7. und 6. Jh.s v. Chr.*, Heidelberg 1993, p. 24-25. As transcribed *ibid.*, the text reads: *ḫtm šlpqd / ksp šqlyn II /*

of the third sign-complex as a (possibly casual) ligature, is of course hypothetical.

5) BM 91223. Layard, no. 5 = *CIS* II/1, 5 = Mitchell, no. 5 (with bibl.) Bronze lion-weight. Style: group F<sup>18</sup>. 14,6 x 7,6 cms. Weight: 1,931 Kgs. Photo of piece: *SAA* VI, p. XXV, fig. 4c. Photo of text: *CIS* II/1, tab. I. Copy: fig. 5.

Fig. 5

1. (on l.h. side) *mnn* II / *zy mlk*
2. (on r.h. side) //
3. (on back) É.GAL <sup>1</sup>dšûl-m[an]-MAŠ MAN KUR AŠ  
2 MA.NA šá (eroded space) LUGAL

“(Aram.) Minas: 2 of the king”.

2 vertical strokes

“(Akk.) Palace of Shalmaneser, king of Assyria; 2 minas of the king”.

6) BM 91228. Layard, no. 8 = *CIS* II/1,6 = Mitchell, no. 8  
Bronze lion-weight. Style: type A (handle missing). Size: 9,9 x 6,1 cms.  
Weight: 0,955 Kgs. Photo of piece: Mitchell, p. 135, top; *SAA* VI, p.

*wrb't lqh mn / 'bhr yrhb / bplgh / yrh nysn / šhd hdy / nbwdmq*. In this interesting text, notice the following items: (1) in view of *šlpqd*, where the name *lpqd* = Ass. *llu-ippid* seems discernible, we would have to deal with the use of *š* for the *nota genitivi*, as a calque of Assyrian *ša*, similarly to (one or both) the Neirab stelae and to a couple of cases in Assyrian Aramaic (discussion in FALES, *AECT*, p. 84-85); (2) the noun *plg*, “half”, was hitherto unattested earlier than the Elephantine texts.

<sup>18</sup> MITCHELL's group F (only this exemplar) shows “No handle; summary face, closed jaws, pricked-up ears, mane of incised lines, tail forward over right haunch, sheet base in one with animal”. The piece also presents a “rectangular aperture in bottom partially plugged with lead” (p. 136).



XXIV, fig. 3a, 3rd from left. Photo of text: *CIS* II/1, tab. I. Copy: fig. 6.

1. (on right flank) *mnh*

Fig. 6

2. (on base) *mnh mlk*

3. (on left flank) É.GAL 1<sup>d</sup>šul-man-MAŠ

MAN KUR AŠ

1 MA.NA šá 'MAN'

4. (on left flank, below l. 3) /

“(Aram.) Mina; mina of the king”

“(Akk.) Palace of Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, 1 mina of the king”

1 vertical stroke

7) BM 91230. Layard, no. 9 = *CIS* II/1,7 = Mitchell, no. 9

Bronze lion-weight. Style: type A. 8,6 x 6,4 cms. Weight: 0,666 Kgs.

Photo of piece: Mitchell p. 133, top; *SAA* VI, front cover (color); p. XXIV,

fig. 3a, 3rd from right. Photo of text: *CIS* II/1, tab. I. Copy: fig. 7.

Fig. 7

1. (on base, below right flank) *snb* 'r<sup>q</sup>'
2. (on left flank) X
3. (on back) É.GAL 1.<sup>d</sup>Šùl[-*man*-MAŠ] MAN KUR AŠ  
2/3 MA.NA šá LUGAL

“(Aram.) Two-thirds — the land”.

1 vertical stroke crossed by a horizontal towards the top

“(Akk.) Palace of Shalmaneser, king of Assyria; two-thirds of a mina of the king”

**Notes.** On the Aramaic word *snb*, which is to be considered a loanword from Akk. *šinēpum*, “two-thirds”, cf. S.A. Kaufman, *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic*, Chicago-London 1974, p. 103.

8) BM 91227. Layard, no. 11 = *CIS* II/1,9 = Mitchell no. 11 (but see below) Bronze lion-weight. Style: type D<sup>19</sup>. Size: 9,2 x 4,5. Weight: 0,468 Kgs. Photo of piece: Mitchell, p. 133, bottom; *SAA* VI, fig. 3a. Photo of text: *CIS* II/1, tab. I Copy: fig. 8.

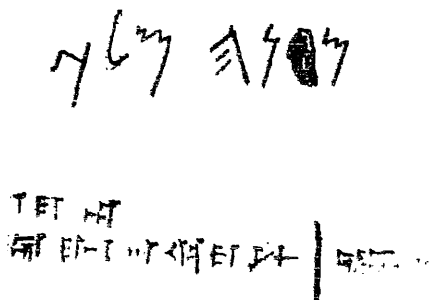


Fig. 8

1. (on bottom) *m* (cavity) *nh mlk*
2. (on back) /
3. (on back) 1 MA.NA  
É.GAL 1.<sup>d</sup>Šùl-*ma-nu*-MAŠ' LUGAL [(?)]

“(Aram.) Mina of the king”

1 vertical stroke

“(Akk.) 1 mina. Palace of Shalmaneser, king”

**Notes.** The cavity on the bottom was obviously already extant when the inscription was engraved; it may have been used to fill the lion with

<sup>19</sup> MITCHELL, *op. cit.* (n. 10), p. 135: “No handle, lightly suggested face, closed jaws, pricked-up ears, mane of leaf-like tufts with incised lines, tail (with large bulge at end) forward along right side”.

lead, as in no. 5, above. The Akkadian text was not given by *CIS*, as being *ferè totus deletus*, although mention was made of the fact that the then resident Assyriologist at the British Museum, T. Pinches, *estimavit leonem regi Salmanassaro adscribendum esse*, correctly as it turns out. The vertical stroke of the number "1" is placed right in the center of the Akkadian inscription, before the final LUGAL.

Unfortunately, a mix-up as concerns the inscriptions seems to have occurred in Mitchell's catalogue (p. 134b) between this item and the following one: the lion-weight bearing the Aramaic epigraph *mnh mlk* which is interrupted by a cavity is in fact this 468-gram one, and not BM 91229 (registration no. 48-11-4, 74), my no. (9), and Mitchell's no. 10, i.e. the one weighing 480 grams. This confusion has then a bearing on Mitchell's classification of the relevant cuneiform inscriptions, which are not only inverted but also erroneously read (perhaps on the basis of previous interpretations quoted in the bibliography). The mix-up might be traced back to an erroneous attribution in Layard's original list (Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon, cit.*, plate facing p. 601), where in fact no. 10, the heavier of the two 1-mina lions (1 lb, 3 oz, 8 dwt, 17 grs, versus 1 lb 3 oz, 1 dwt, 5 grs of no. 11), is given as presenting the cavity. The correct order of Aramaic texts and weights had been given by De Vogüé in *CIS* and, as concerns the Akkadian inscription and the weights, by Weissbach in *ZDMG* 1907: but Mitchell takes pains to recorrect *CIS* back, and in Weissbach's case he even provides the same item-numbering of the German author (no. 69) for both texts.

9) BM 91229. Layard no. 10 = *CIS* II/1,8 = Mitchell no. 10.

Bronze lion-weight. Style: type B<sup>20</sup>. Size: 9,2 x 4,5 cms. Weight: 0,480 Kgs. Photo of text: *CIS* II/1, tab. I. Copy: fig. 9.

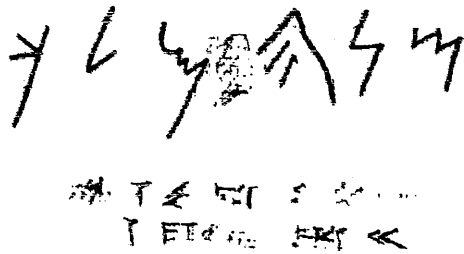


Fig. 9

<sup>20</sup> MITCHELL, *op. cit.* (n. 10), p. 135: "No handle, well depicted face, gaping jaws with sharp teeth, pricked-up ears, mane of leaf-like tufts, tail forward along right side, no sheet base".

1. (on bottom) *mnh mlk*
2. (on left flank) /
3. (on back) 'KUR' 1.MAN.GIN 'MAN KUR AŠ'  
1 MA.'NA' ša MAN

“(Aram.) Mina of the king”

1 vertical stroke

“(Akk.) Palace of Sargon, king of Assyria; 1 mina of the king”.

**Notes.** To be noticed are the differences in this Akkadian inscription on the exemplars from Shalmaneser V's reign: KUR in lieu of É.GAL in the first line; ša for šá in the second line (while the use of MAN for LUGAL in the final formula was already present in nos. 2, 6). Mitchell's translation “Land(/palace) of Sargon, etc.” (p. 134a) is misleading: as all Assyriologists know (and cf. Borger, *ABZ*, p. 148 *ad* 366), KUR is a well-known NA abbreviated logographic rendering for *ekallu*, “palace”.

10) BM 91231. Layard, no. 12 = *CIS* II/1, 10 = Mitchell, no. 12  
Bronze lion-weight. Style: type E<sup>21</sup>. Size: 7,3 x 3,7 cms. Weight: 0,241 Kgs.. Photo of text: *CIS* II/1, tab. I. Copy: fig. 10.

Fig. 10

1. (on bottom) *prš*
2. (on right flank) KUR 1.d30-PAPMEŠ-SU  
MAN KUR AŠ  
1/2 MA.NA

“(Aram.) One half”

“(Akk.) Palace of Sennacherib, king of Assyria. 1/2 mina”

<sup>21</sup> MITCHELL, *op. cit.* (n. 10), p. 135b: “No handle, simple face, closed jaws, no visible ears, halo-like mane with leaf-like tufts, tail up right of back, large sheet base”.

**Notes.** The Aramaic text is not, as stated by *CIS*, located *dextro leonis lateri*. For *prš*, cf. Kaufman, *op. cit.* p. 80 and note 254, who however does not consider the term a loanword from Akk. *pārisu*.

11) BM 91232. Layard, no. 13 = *CIS* II/1, 11 = Mitchell, no. 13  
Bronze lion-weight. Style: type A, with handle. Size: 6,7 x 3,8 cms.  
Weight: 0,237 Kgs. Photo of piece: Mitchell, p. 133, top. SAA VI, p. XXV, fig. 4a, 1st from right. Photo of text: *CIS* II/1, tab. I. Copy: fig. 11.



Fig. 11

1. (on bottom) *rb' 'rq'*
2. (on left flank) *////*
3. (on back) É.GAL <sup>1.šúL</sup>-[*man/ma-nu-MAŠ* (MAN KUR AŠ)]  
4-tú šá 'LUGAL'

“(Aram.) One-fourth — the land”

4 vertical strokes

“(Akk.) Palace of Shalmaneser, *king of Assyria*. One fourth of the king”.

**Notes.** As in the case of no. **10**, the Aramaic inscription is not posited on *dextro leonis lateri*, as *CIS* would have it. The transcription of 4-tú is not *erbettu* (Mitchell), but *rabuttu*, “one-fourth”: cf. *AHw.*, p. 964b-965a. As for Aramaic *rb'*, it is also attested in some triangular silver loan-documents from NA Assur: cf. Fales, *AECT*, no. 50:3; 51:3, where “one-fourth”, i.e. 25%, represents the expected interest rate.

12) BM 91233. Layard, no. 14 = *CIS* II/1,12 = Mitchell, no. 14  
Bronze lion-weight. Style: type A, complete, handle on back, ring around neck. Size: 6,4 x 3,7 cms. Weight: 0,198 Kgs. Photo of piece: Mitchell, p. 133, top. Photo of text: *CIS* II/1, tab. I. Copy: fig. 12.

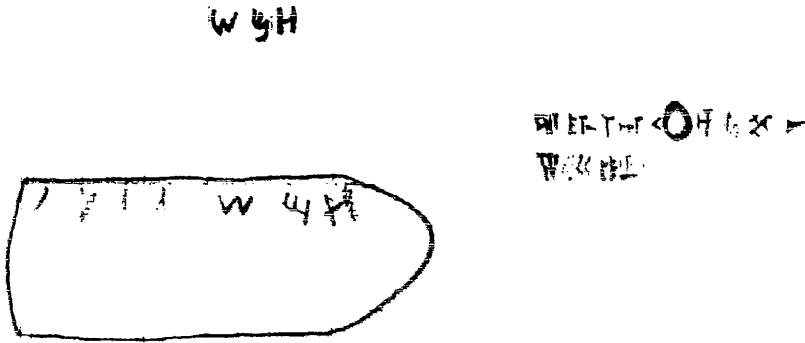


Fig. 12

1. (on right flank) *hmš*
2. (on bottom) *hmš* ' ? ?'
3. (on left flank) // // //
4. (on back) É.GAL 14Š[ùl-(cavity)MAN]-MAŠ 'MAN' KUR AŠ
- 5 [-su] šá LUG[AL]

“(Aram.) One-fifth; one fifth...”

5 vertical strokes

“(Akk.) Palace of Shalmaneser, king of Assyria; *one-fifth* of the king”.

**Notes.** The Aramaic text on the bottom starts from the right edge, but then only a few scratches follow the word *hmš*: perhaps a further section of text was intended, but not fully engraved. In the Assyrian text, *hamussu*, “one-fifth”<sup>22</sup> is reconstructed in its common Neo-Assyrian writing, similarly to *rabuttu* of no. 11, above.

13) BM 91234. Layard, no. 15 = *CIS* II/1, 13 = Mitchell, no. 15  
Bronze lion-weight. Style: type G<sup>23</sup>; two rings around neck (one now missing). 4,1 x 2,1 cms. Weight: 0,05236 Kgs<sup>24</sup>. Photo of text: *CIS* II/1, tab. I. Copy: fig. 13.

<sup>22</sup> And not “5 sixtieths” as MITCHELL would have it (p. 135a): for *hamussu*, cf. *AHw.*, p. 319b; J.N. POSTGATE, *Fifty Neo-Assyrian Legal Documents*, Warminster 1976, p. 63 (§ 6.1.2).

<sup>23</sup> MITCHELL, *op. cit.* (n. 10), p. 135b: “No handle, face worn, closed jaws, ears indistinct, mane plain, tail forward over right haunch”.

<sup>24</sup> With rings 0,0546 Kgs, according to Dr. J. CURTIS.

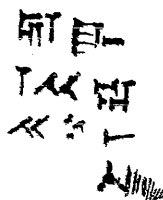


Fig. 13

1. (on bottom) *šqln III*
2. (on left flank) *///*
3. (on back) É.GAL  
1.MAN.GIN  
MAN KUR AŠ  
[x x x x]

“(Aram.) III shekels”

3 vertical strokes

“(Akk.) Palace of Sargon, king of Assyria; ……….”

**Notes.** The presence of a badly preserved fourth line is not mentioned by Mitchell, 135a.: it presumably held the notation “3 shekels of the king”

14) BM 91235. *CIS* II/1, 14<sup>25</sup>

Bronze lion-weight. Style: type H<sup>26</sup>. Size: 3,8 x 1,8 cms. Weight: 0,036 Kgs.<sup>27</sup> Photo of piece: *SAA* VI, p. XXIV, fig. 3a. Photo of text: *CIS* II/1, tab. I. Copy: fig. 14.

<sup>25</sup> MITCHELL, *op. cit.* (n. 10), p. 135b, quotes a Layard number 16 from *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon*, plate facing p. 601, for this text, but despite the already-mentioned discovery of “sixteen copper lions”, the catalogue in question has only 15 entries.

<sup>26</sup> MITCHELL, *op. cit.* (n. 10), p. 135b: “No handle, face worn, gaping jaws, ears indistinct, mane plain, tail forward over right haunch”.

<sup>27</sup> WEISSBACH, *op. cit.* (n. 2), no. 75 (*Leo 16*) has 33,63 grams here.

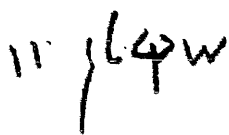


Fig. 14

1. (on underside) *šqln II*
2. (on l.h. side) //

“(Aram.) Two shekels”

2 vertical strokes

\*\*\*\*

To the 14 lion-weights inscribed in Aramaic and Akkadian, two more specimens should be added, in order to gain a full view of the entire group discovered by Layard. The first of the two (no. 15) is BM 91224 = Layard no. 6 = Mitchell no. 6, style of B type, with no handle and base plate possibly missing, 11,45 x 5,1 cms in size, weighing 946 grams. It bears 2 strokes on the left flank, and the Akkadian inscription on the back, which presents, according to my reading:

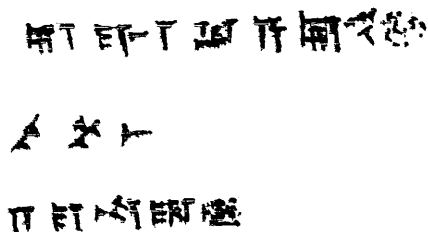


Fig. 15

É.GAL ʾTUKUL-A-É-ŠÀR[-RA  
 MAN KUR AŠ  
 2 MA.NA šá LUG'AL'

“Palace of Tiglathpileser, king of Assyria, 2 minas of the king”<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>28</sup> The last sign (cf. fig. 15) was to me quite clear, although faded in its final part; I thus consider the reading “2 *ma-na ša māti* (KUR)” offered by MITCHELL (*op. cit.*, p. 132: with the comment “KUR difficult to see but possible”) to be out of the question, despite L.W. KING’s collation (quoted *ibid.*).



The second specimen (16) is possibly an unfinished piece (BM 91225 = Layard no. 7 = Mitchell no. 7). It has a distinctive style (type C)<sup>29</sup>, its size is 10,5 x 6,4 cms., but weighs an abnormal 1036,5 grams. It bears neither inscription nor strokes.

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At this point, having presented the Akkadian and Aramaic inscriptions on the lion-weights from Nimrud anew in their epigraphic and philological aspects, we may tackle the main characteristics of the pieces as a group in brief form, attempting to define the historical context of the objects as precisely as possible.

**Date of the pieces.** As established by previous commentators, the date of the 16 lion-weights is far from being uniform. Taking into account the new readings of the cuneiform texts we have proposed above, the chronological scheme of the pieces is as follows<sup>30</sup>:

Tiglathpileser III (745-727 BC)	no. <b>15</b> (BM 91224)
Shalmaneser V (726-722 BC)	nos. <b>1</b> (BM 91220) <sup>31</sup> , <b>2</b> (BM 91221), <b>3</b> (BM 91226), <b>4</b> (BM 91222), <b>5</b> (BM 91223), <b>6</b> (BM 91228), <b>7</b> (BM 91230), <b>8</b> (BM 91227), <b>11</b> (BM 91232), <b>12</b> (BM 91233)
Sargon II (721-704 BC)	nos. <b>9</b> (BM 91229), <b>13</b> (BM 91234)
Sennacherib (704-681 BC)	nos. <b>10</b> (BM 91231)
No date	<b>14</b> (BM 91235), <b>16</b> (BM 91225).

In brief, it may be stated that Layard's find involved a chronologically varied group of objects, with a range of dates of possible accumulation /deposit spanning three-quarters of a century. In any case, the vast majority of the pieces (10 out of 14 dated exemplars) goes back to the short-lived reign of Shalmaneser V.

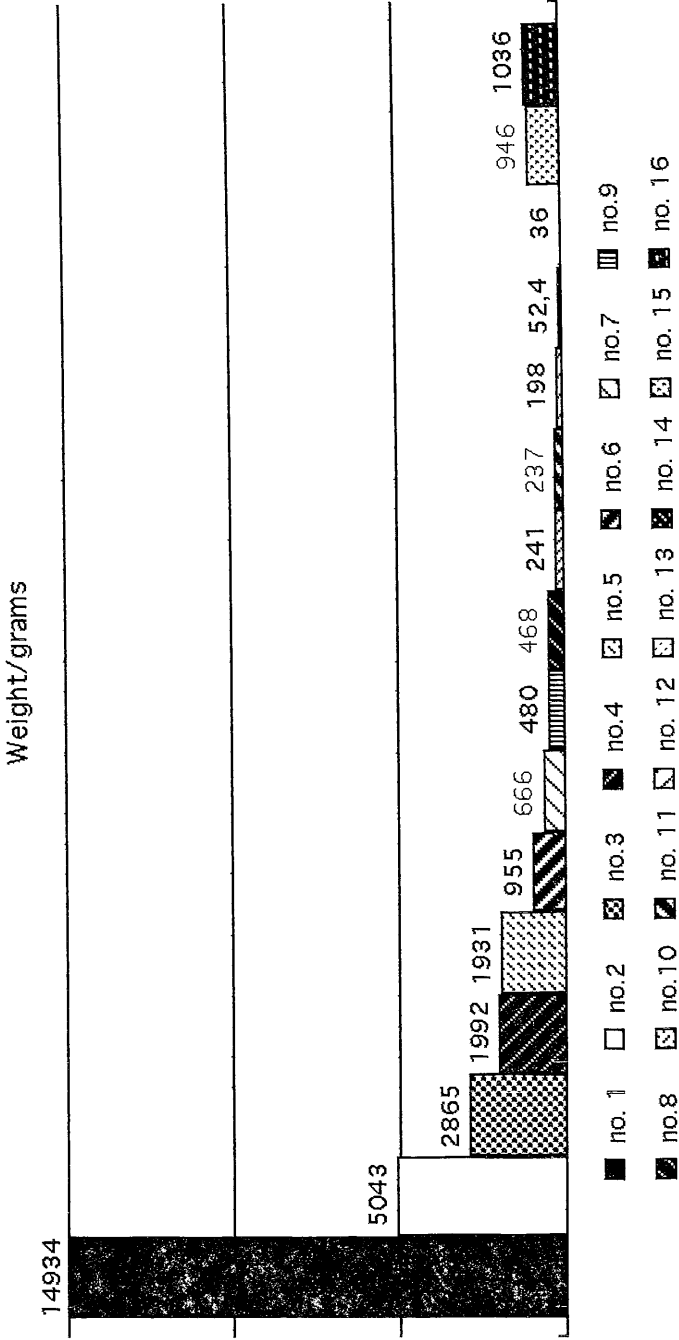
**Absolute weights represented.** The picture of the absolute weights of the lions is partly consequent to the above. The group of Shalmaneser's weights is represented in fig. 16: as may be seen, with the exception of

<sup>29</sup> MITCHELL, *op. cit.* (n. 10), p. 135: "No handle, lumpy face, gaping jaws with crude teeth, pricked-up ears, mane of crude lumps, tail forward over right haunch", also with a "hole behind mane, possibly for attachment of a ring".

<sup>30</sup> See MITCHELL, *op. cit.* (n. 10), p. 136, for a mixed chronological-ponderal chart.

<sup>31</sup> Agreeing with MITCHELL, *op. cit.* (n. 10), p. 130, the style of the piece and the characteristics of the Aramaic inscription point quite plausibly to the reign of this king.

Fig. 16: absolute weights



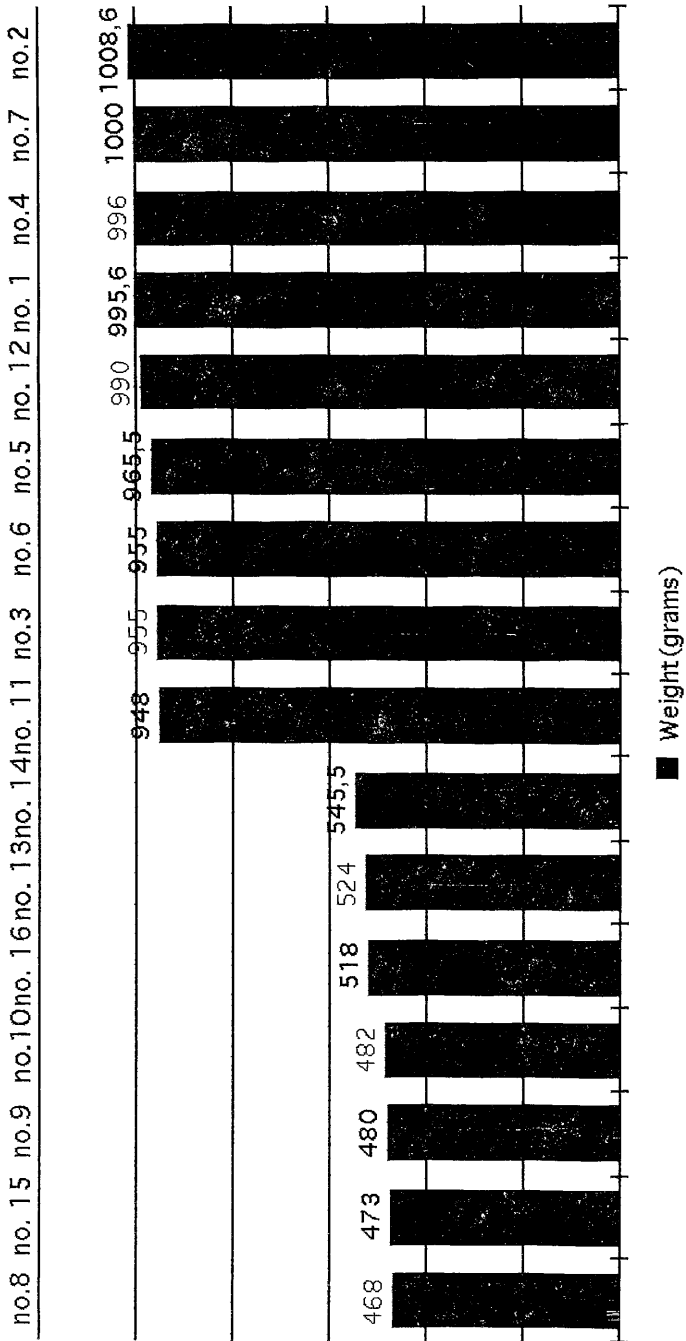


Fig. 17: average values of the mina

no. 5, we have to deal with a definite progression in absolute weights, which may be viewed *in kilograms* (with the necessary approximation) as follows:  $15 > 5 > 3 > 2 > 1 > 2/3 > 1/2 > 1/4 > 1/5$  Kgs.. Agreeing with Mitchell, therefore, it may be suggested that “the Shalmaneser weights belong to a single set”<sup>32</sup>. Among the other weights, on the other hand, we find not only additions to the set — such is the case of nos. 13 (1/20 of a Kg.) and 14 (1/30 of a Kg.) — but also duplicates of quantities attested in the Shalmaneser group (thus no. 9 is again 1/2 Kg.; no. 11 is 1/4 Kg.; nos. 15 and 16 [?] correspond to 1 Kg.). All in all, then, Layard’s impression of “a regular series, diminishing in size from the largest ... to the smallest”<sup>33</sup> does not find a full corroboration in the evidence: and the 16 lion-weights appear to be — with Mitchell — “a very mixed lot”, possibly left over from as many complete series of statuettes as were the kings who wrote their name on them.

**Weight standards.** If the kilogram has been used above to ascertain the distribution of absolute weights in the group of Nimrud lion-weights, this is due to the fact that the kilogram approximates closely the weight-standard which seems to have been in most common use in Assyria during the 8th-7th centuries B.C., i.e. the “heavy” (*dannu*) mina<sup>34</sup>. On the other hand, there is also proof of the existence and diffusion of a further weight standard, totally contemporary with the former: the “light” (*qallu*) mina, of exactly half the weight of its “heavy” counterpart<sup>35</sup>.

Of both these standards — as has long been known — exactly our lion-weights are among the most important pieces of evidence. In particular, when the series of absolute weights considered above is compared with the written evidence on the pieces, we are faced with a fully operative picture of the double standard for the Assyrian mina: for a reduction of all the lion-weights to their average mina (absolute mina divided by the number of minas indicated by the inscription) gives the following results (cf. fig. 17):

Light mina (around 500 grams)	nos. 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16
Heavy mina (around 1000 grams)	nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12

<sup>32</sup> MITCHELL, *op. cit.* (n. 10), p. 136a.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. fn. 1, above.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. the literature quoted in fn. 3, above: the “heavy” mina is reckoned at approx. 1.01 Kgs.

<sup>35</sup> I.e. approx. 0.505 Kgs. Specifically, as indicated by POSTGATE, *Fifty Neo-Assyrian Legal Documents*, Warminster 1976, p. 64, the light mina was formed by 60 light shekels, or 30 heavy shekels. Thus it is clear that the shekels in nos. 13 and 14 were heavy, since they are both multiples (2x, 3x) of 0.018 Kgs., the heavy shekel standard.

In detail, our lion-weights give us evidence of the following weights according to the two standards:

Light mina	2 minas (twice?), 1 mina (twice), 1/2 mina
Heavy mina	15 minas, 5 minas, 3 minas, 2 minas (twice), 1 mina, 2/3 mina, 1/4 mina, 1/5 mina, 3 shekels (1/20 mina), 2 shekels (1/30 mina)

**Assyrian and Aramaic.** As said above, through the inscriptions on the flanks or bases of the lions we are able to perceive which of the two Assyrian mina-standards was meant or implied on the individual weights. These inscriptions were engraved on the bronze statuettes both in Akkadian cuneiform and in Aramaic alphabetic script; and a further, unequivocal, indication of the quantities intended was provided through something like a tally, i.e. by a “pictographic” series of  $n$  parallel strokes.

The Akkadian inscriptions are of a relatively standard type: written in the official ductus of NA royal inscriptions (although random Neo-Babylonian forms may make their appearance here and there, esp. for É and šá), they present a fixed set of logographic correspondences, very rarely subject to inner variation. The formulary is also basically uniform: “Palace of So-and-so, King of Assyria: *weight-measure* of the king”.

The Aramaic counterparts to these inscriptions are, correspondingly, devoid of large elements of variation. The most frequently attested formulary here is (NUMBER) *mnyn zy mlk*, “ $n$  minas of the king”, with the number expressed — very precious for us — in letters (*šlšt*, *hmšt*, *šr*). A slightly different case occurs with 2 and 1 minas, when duals (*mnyn*) and singulars (*mnh*) are used. In brief, these formulae pertain to a relatively well-attested level of interrelation between the Aramaic and Assyrian linguistic and cultural complexes: the latter, as dominant entity, provides the basic message, which is rendered verbatim into the alphabetic script of the time<sup>36</sup>.

**The Aramaic clause with  $\text{ʾrq}^{\text{ʾ}}$ .** On the other hand, it may be noticed that this Aramaic formulary is not the only one attested in our corpus. On six of the sixteen lion-weights under examination<sup>37</sup>, in fact, it is flanked by a further text in alphabetic script, placed on the right flank on the larger lions, on the base on the smaller exemplars. This additional epigraph is

<sup>36</sup> Cf. F.M. FALES, *AECT*, *passim* but esp. 1-105, on this issue.

<sup>37</sup> Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 11 according to our numbering above.

also virtually invariable: *mnn* NUMBER *b zy ʾrqʾ* which becomes — in smaller-sized and less important cases — FRACTION OF MINA *ʾrqʾ*.

What did this particular formulary mean, and what were its implications for the value of the lion-weights? While most of the previous authors translate the *ʾrqʾ*-clause one way or the other<sup>38</sup>, very little has been offered by way of a contextual explanation. But in any case, before attempting to provide a direct answer to the above query, let us take a closer look at the formal context in which this datum occurs. First of all, let us consider the following chart, relevant to all the *ʾrqʾ*-clauses:

1, 1. <i>mnn</i> XV <i>b zy ʾrqʾ</i>	2. <i>ʾhʾmšt ʾšr mnyn [bʾ zy] mlk[()]</i>
2, 1. <i>mnn</i> V <i>b zy ʾrqʾ</i>	2. <i>hmšt ʾzʾy mlk</i>
3, 1. <i>mnn</i> III <i>b zy ʾrqʾ</i>	2. <i>šlšt mny[n zy m]lk</i>
4, 1. <i>mnn</i> (scratch) II <i>b / zy ʾrqʾ</i>	2. <i>[()] mn y+nʾ zy mlk</i>
7, 1. <i>snb ʾrqʾ</i>	/
11, 1. <i>rb ʾrqʾ</i>	/

Now, it may be noticed that both the orthography and the syntax of the *ʾrqʾ*-clauses in the texts are quite at variance with the *mlk*-clauses occurring on the same pieces. The main oppositions are in the method of numbering (the *ʾrqʾ*-texts write out the numbers in digits) which in turn influences the syntax (the *ʾrqʾ*-texts present the number after the word “minas”) and in the *matres lectionis* (the *ʾrqʾ*-texts do not give the -y- in the plural “minas”)<sup>39</sup>. While these are not particularly dramatic differences, they are sufficient, in my view, to suggest the possibility that two distinct Aramaic scribes intervened on the lion-weights, each writing out formulae according to his specific style.

The second point to be made concerning the lion-weights in which the *ʾrqʾ*-clause is present, concerns the weight standards in use. As we have seen, the heavy mina is the most frequently attested standard in this group of objects: so we shall not be overly surprised to find that *all the inscriptions bearing the ʾrqʾ-clause are on lion-weights centered on the heavy mina*. This point does not seem to have been made in prior studies; and the same goes for another observation, that the *ʾrqʾ*-clauses occur exclusively on texts of the age of *Shalmaneser V*.

<sup>38</sup> Thus, e.g. already WEISSBACH, *ZDMG* 61 (1907), p. 394ff., nos. 60-75, *passim*, “... Mana des Landes”, and similarly MITCHELL, *op. cit.* (n. 10), p. 130ff.. On the other hand, it may be noted with some surprise, that *DISO* omits the mention of all the quoted cases on p. 25-26, s.v. ʾṣ, and that Vattioni, *op. cit.* (n. 8), p. 175ff., translates consistently “mina/e del campo”, which of course makes no sense whatsoever.

<sup>39</sup> Notice, however, that *mnn* also occurs in one *mlk*-text, i.e. no. 5.

At this point, a specific interpretation of the clause may be offered. The Aramaic formula presenting *mnn n b zy* is quite obviously a one-to-one calque of an Assyrian expression, *n manê ina ša ...*, “*n* minas by the (standard/mina) of...”, which is to be found relatively often in loan or sales documents of the 8th-7th century B.C.<sup>40</sup> But what was implied by the standard of reference *ʾrqʾ*? Taking into account the fact that, save for a questionable reference in a legal document<sup>41</sup>, no “mina of the land” is attested in NA cuneiform texts, I believe it reasonable to provide a very general semantic value for *ʾrqʾ* in this context. In other words, I believe that “mina of the land” meant purely and simply the mina in common use all over the country — the mina of everyday commerce. And — for what has been said above — such a mina can have been none other than the heavy, 1000-gram, standard.

If this line of reasoning were considered acceptable, we would be dealing with an indeed intriguing situation, presumably taking place around the years 726-722 B.C., which may be reconstructed as follows. The royal bureaus of Shalmaneser V might have at some point laid their hands (war booty?) on a set of lion-weights with an Aramaic inscription specifying the respective ponderal values by the mina of everyday use, the “mina of the land”; the weights might already have borne the tally-marks as well, for the benefit of those not versed in the intricacies of the alphabetic script. Thereupon, the scribes of the court would have added on the body of each lion not only an Akkadian text mentioning the king’s name, but also a further Aramaic inscription: the two epigraphs had in common the expression “*n* royal mina(s)”, denoting that while the weight-standard remained unchanged, the guarantee of the Assyrian Crown was henceforth on the piece.

Of course, the light mina was also in use at the Assyrian court, at the very same time, as we learn from no. 8; and later kings, from Sargon to Sennacherib, also made use of both of the “royal” minas for their lion-weights — while keeping up the tradition of having bilingual inscriptions engraved. Thus, eventually, it came to pass that a very mixed assortment of lion-weights was placed together in one deposit: in this bunch, a few residues of a set of (possibly looted) Aramaic lion-weights with the uncommon standard of the “mina of the land” of approx. 725 BC had by

<sup>40</sup> Cf. J.N. POSTGATE, *Fifty Neo-Assyrian Legal Documents*, Warminster 1976, p. 65, 198a.

<sup>41</sup> *ADD 376* (=SAA VI 176): 11', where two estates are sold at 20 minas of copper [*ina*] MA.NA-*e* ša KUR-*e*. The authors note (p. 144, app. crit.) that perhaps KUR-*e*, “mountain” was a mistake for KUR, “land”.

then been fatally jumbled together with later additions — much to the delight of Austen Henry Layard and all his followers up to this day.

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I can only hope that this reexamination has made the inscriptions on the lion-weights more meaningful to students of *Assyro-aramaica*, a small but crucial interdisciplinary field in which we are all grateful to Edouard Lipiński for the many invaluable results he has reached and generously made available over the years.

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