

**ASSYRIAN LETTERS
FROM THE ROYAL
LIBRARY AT NINEVEH**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649474523

Assyrian Letters from the Royal Library at Nineveh by Samuel Alden Smith

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

SAMUEL ALDEN SMITH

**ASSYRIAN LETTERS
FROM THE ROYAL
LIBRARY AT NINEVEH**

1/2 L

ASSYRIAN LETTERS

FROM THE

ROYAL LIBRARY

AT

NINEVEH.

TRANSCRIBED, TRANSLATED, AND EXPLAINED

BY

SAMUEL ALDEN SMITH.



LEIPZIG:

EDWARD PFEIFFER

1888.

[Handwritten scribbles and lines are present on the page, including a large 'X' shape on the right side.]

HARRASSOW. 17.

AUG 8 1887

8614

X 453
ASSYRIAN LETTERS.

By S. A. SMITH.

*Reprinted from the "Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archaeology,"
June, 1887.*

One of the most difficult portions of the Assyrian literature is composed of the letters and despatches. It is partly due to this fact that so little has been done in explaining or translating them. George Smith only attempted to translate a very few, and outside of this little had been done until Mr. Pinches gave several in transcription and translation, accompanied where possible by the text. Fourteen such documents are to be found transcribed, translated, and explained in the second part of my edition of the texts of Asurbanipal; in the third part, which is now in the press, the texts of K. 582, K. 514, K. 533, K. 679, K. 686, K. 669, K. 11, K. 525, K. 183, K. 1249, K. 1252, K. 1229, K. 487, K. 549, K. 578, and K. 96, accompanied in the same manner by transcription, translation, and notes, will be given. These numbers represent some of the best preserved, most important, as well as the most difficult tablets in the British Museum collection. The six that are given below are perfect specimens, and may be taken as a type of the others.

Some reasons why these letters are so difficult are apparent:

1. They are torn out of their connection in the circumstances in which their authors were placed at the time, and they belong to a longer correspondence, of which we have no knowledge, but which is necessary in order to a good understanding of any single letter.
2. We are dependent to a large extent on the help afforded by the cognate languages for our ability to explain any Assyrian texts. But we have in Hebrew only the sacred writings giving us the annals of the nation, which corresponds exactly to the kind of accounts we find in the Assyrian historical inscriptions. By this

means we are enabled to arrive at the meaning quite clearly and readily. For these reports, which come from all parts of the empire in its most flourishing years, we have no such help. If we had a series of such miscellaneous reports in Hebrew, they would doubtless give us such linguistic help as would materially aid us in better explaining the tablets under consideration. It is as if some one 2500 years hence, studying and deciphering the annals of the rulers of the British Empire, should find some short letters from Yorkshire, Lancashire, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland, written by a chief of police, some revenue and tax collector, or army official, whose grammar would not be regular or his style faultless. He would find here dialectic peculiarities and words which he had never seen before, and would often be at a loss to see any meaning in them at all. Words which he had translated readily in the annals would occasion him much trouble, because the writers of the letters employ them in an entirely new sense. Now this is precisely the case with the letters which we have from the library at Nineveh. There seems to me to be no need of hesitating to admit that the reports of Bêl-ibni, Asurbanipal's general, with reference to the condition of affairs in the camp, or the letters of Nabû-sum-iddin, who so often writes about horses, may contain linguistic inconsistencies which the learned scribe of the court would have condemned. They came from all parts of Asurbanipal's great empire, and are full of dialectic peculiarities, common among the people, but not used at the king's court. In explaining the words, however, we must attempt to explain them grammatically in each instance.

There is a long list of words known only to us in these report-tablets. One of the most common is *adanniš* (S. 1064) *ad-dan-niš* (cf. Part II of my edition of Asurbanipal). It is quite certainly to be compared with the Aramaic 𐤀𐤃𐤍𐤏𐤍 "time." The connection as well as the etymology proves it to mean "constantly, all the time." The adjective *adannu* is of frequent occurrence.

The importance of these messages is not the historic references they are supposed by some to contain, for these are generally so slight and indefinite that their value is small. Their chief historic worth is that they enable us to fill up wanting passages in the historical inscriptions, and where they are clear, they enable us sometimes to obtain a better understanding of difficult clauses

of the historical inscriptions. Their great importance, however, seems to me to be linguistic; but here and there we find references which are the most valuable for our knowledge of the manners and customs of the people. We are also enabled to settle the readings of many words by the variants given us in these letters; e.g. $\text{𐎶𐎵𐎶} \text{𐎶} \text{𐎶}$ of the annals of Asurbanipal is written $\text{𐎶𐎵} \text{𐎶}$ $\text{𐎶} \text{𐎶}$ $\text{𐎶} \text{𐎶}$ in K. 11 mentioned above (cf. my remarks in *Zeitschr. für Assyriologie*, 1887, p. 227), which settles the question as to the pronunciation of the name. A great many titles of officials are mentioned in these documents which we meet nowhere else, and of the nature of whose office or functions we know nothing.

Attention may also be called to the fact that two classes of correspondence exist, a familiar or less formal kind, which is not addressed to the king, and the official, which is always addressed to him, if it be not a communication from the king himself; this latter class is by far the most numerous.

It would be intensely interesting and valuable if we could hit upon some plan by which the Assyrian "report-tablets" might be classified according to the province or district from which they came. This we cannot do to any large extent at present, but if we were able to do so, we should then be able to learn the peculiarities of the language used in any particular portion of the Assyrian Empire. If the generals or officials employed scribes to do their writing for them, then these were certainly scribes of the district where they were, but it may easily be true that they were written by the officials themselves.

Any translations of this class of inscriptions which have been made, or which may now be made, will need material revision after a larger number of letters have been published and compared with each other, for it is only by such comparison and study that many of these documents can be, to any extent, satisfactorily explained.

The translations given below therefore are sure to need revision in the future, for some parts the writer has been unable to find a translation or explanation at all satisfactory to himself. The order of the words in the Assyrian has been followed wherever possible, so that the reader may know whence the translations come when there is no note to aid him.

K. 482.

Transcription.

A-na šarri be-li-ia
 ardu-ka Nabû-našir
 Nabû u Marduk
 a-na šarri be-li-ia
 5 a-dan-niš a-dan-niš
 lik-ru-bu
 šul-mu a-dan-niš a-dan-niš
 a-na pi-ki-te
 ša bêlit par-ši
 10 lib-bi ša-šarri
 be-li-ia
 a-dan-niš lu ta-ab-šu

Translation.

To the king, my lord,
 thy servant, Nabû-našir.
 May Nebo and Merodach
 to the king, my lord
 constantly, constantly
 be gracious.
 Peace constantly, constantly (to him).
 By appointment
 of the lady of command,
 may the heart of the king,
 my lord,
 constantly rejoice him.

REV.

ša pi-ki-te
 ša bêlit par-ši
 15 šarru be-li
 apil aplê-šu
 ina bur ki-e-šu
 li-in-tu-ju
 par-šu-ma-a-te
 20 ina zi-iq-ni-šu-nu
 li-mur

By appointment
 of the lady of command,
 may the king, my lord
 his grandsons
 upon his knees
 rest,
 gray hairs (?)
 upon their beards
 may he see.

REMARKS.

The characters $\text{𒀭} \text{𒀭} \text{𒀭}$ are, I think, to be read *be-li-ia*. Previous to this time I have adopted the Haupt-Delitzsch transcription *ê-ni-ia*, in which 𒀭 is held to be an ideogram for *ênu*, "lord," and *ni* the phonetic complement. But the character *ni* has the value of *li* according to W.A.I. II, pl. 48, line 42a, and I much prefer to regard the whole as a phonetic writing of the usual *bêlu* "lord."

Line 8, *pi-ki-te*. This word is to be derived from the root 𒀭 ; it probably means "appointment."

Line 9, *bêlit par-ši*. This expression occurs W.A.I. V, 10, 62, where it is written ideographically $\text{𒀭} \text{𒀭}$. The writing $\text{𒀭} \text{𒀭} \text{𒀭}$ (cf. *Heft II* of my *Asurbanipaltexte*, p. 20, line 37, and the *Nachträge*, p. 85) is probably also to be read thus.

Line 13. Although the tablet is somewhat broken here, there can be little doubt about the reading.

Line 17, *bur-ki-c-tu*, "his knees." The root is 𐎠𐎢𐎠.

Line 18, *li-in-tu-ḡu*, comes from the root 𐎠𐎢𐎠, "to rest."

Line 19, *par-tu-ma-a-te*. The following passages in which this word occurs are the only ones known to me at present: K. 183, 16, ff., *Am.* par-tu-mu-te i-ra-ku-du am. ṣihrūtē i-sa-mu-ru*, "the aged dance, the young sing." For *i-ra-ku-du* cf. the Hebrew 𐤊𐤍, "to dance, to spring." Eccl. iii, 4, Isa. xlii, 21. W.A.I. V, 53, No. 3, obv., line 15, ff. *Utu da-ba-bi an-ni-i u ik-ri-bi an-nu-ti ṣa ṣarri be-lī a-na kal-bi-tu ana am. ardi-šu u par-tu-me ṣa dīlī-šu iṣ-pur-u-ni u ik-ru-bu-u-ni*. "From the time of these words and these prayers of the king, (my) lord to his dog, to his servant, and the aged of his house he has sent and has been gracious." In this text (K. 618), as given W.A.I. V, 53, there are two mistakes, which Mr. Pinches and myself were able to correct on comparing the original. In line 11 the first character is 𐎠 instead of 𐎠, and the one before the last is 𐎠 instead of 𐎠.

K. 483.

*Transcription.**Translation.*

A-na ṣarri béli-ia	<i>To the king, my lord,</i>
ardu-ka Nabû nâdin-šum	<i>thy servant Nabû-nâdin-šum.</i>
lu-u ṣul-mu a-na ṣarri béli-ia	<i>Peace to the king, my lord.</i>
Nabû u Marduk	<i>May Nêbo and Merodach</i>
5. a-na ṣarri be-li-ia	<i>to the king, my lord</i>
a-dan-niṣ lik-ru-bu	<i>constantly be gracious.</i>
ina élf ṣa ṣarri béli iṣ-pur-an-ni	<i>As to what the king (my) lord said</i>
ma-a at-ta-ma	<i>thus: thou also.</i>
ša-,al	<i>ask.</i>

REVERSE.

10. amêlu la u-da	<i>The man I do not know,</i>
ai u-šu-tu-u-ni	<i>has he not fled?</i>
a-na man-ni la aš'al	<i>Of whom have I not asked,</i>
am. lu-ṣub-ḡa-ni	<i>the Luṣubḡani,</i>
la aš'al-šu	<i>did I not ask him?</i>

* The *am.* which occurs constantly in my transcription is an abbreviation of *Amêlu*, "man, officer."

REMARKS.

Line 9, *ša'-al*, is from the well-known root שׂאֵל .† The word *al-al*, line 12, and *al-al-šu*, line 14, are also from the same root.

Line 10, *u-da*. This word is probably from דָּעָה , "to know." The same form also occurs W.A.L. V, 53, No. 3, line 34. Besides this the forms *u-di* and *i-di* occur. For the first of these forms see below K. 691, lines 14, 19, and 20; for the second, see below, K. 82, line 28. Cf. further *u-du-u*, S. 1046, rev., line 7—an unpublished letter.

Line 11, *u-šu-tu-u-ni*. I derive this word from the root נָשַׁח , "to go to destruction, to flee." The usual form is *išlāni*.

Line 12, *man-ni*. I take this word to be only another form of *mamma*, *manma*, "who." Cf. Heb. מָנָה , Syr. ܡܢܗ .

Line 13. I cannot explain this line. The character *ha* is perhaps not entirely certain, but it is difficult to see how any other reading is possible. It is probably an official title, but I have met with it nowhere else.

Transcription. S. 1034.

- A-na šarri be-li-ia
 ardu-ka Bel-ikkī-ša
 lu šul-mu a-na šarri béli-ia
 Nabû u Marduk
5. a-na šarri béli-ia a-dan-niš
 a-dan-niš lik-ru-bu
 ina muḥ-ḫi bit zinništi ékalli
 ša ina Kal-zi
 ša šarri be-li ip-ḫi-da-ni-ni
10. bit up-ta-ṭi-ir
 bit uš-še pa-te
 uš-še a-na ka-ra-ri
 libitté kar-mat
 šum-ma šarru be-li i-ḫab-bi
15. a-na am. rab balâté
 ṭi-e-mu liš-ku-nu
 li-lī-ka uš-še
 li-ik-ru-ur

† I write N_1 = Heb. נָ ; N_2 = נָ ; N_3 = נָ , i.e. נָ ; N_4 = נָ , i.e. נָ ; N_5 = נָ , i.e. נָ .