

Introduction

The starting point for this investigation is the discovery of a number of collections of cuneiform tablets left behind by the Assyrians at different places in the centuries from about 1400 to 1000 BC. This is conventionally referred to as the *Middle Assyrian* period, falling as it does between the *Old Assyrian* (roughly 2000–1500 BC) and the *Neo-Assyrian* (roughly 1000–600 BC) periods. These terms are used by philologists to refer to phases in the development of the Assyrian dialect of Akkadian, but they also correspond broadly to different stages in the existence of an Assyrian state, originating at the city of Aššur on the west bank of the Tigris, and governed from there throughout the second millennium BC, although in the first millennium the effective seat of government was transferred northwards, first to Kalḫu, subsequently to Dur-Šarrukin and finally to Nineveh.

Although in the early second millennium BC the city of Aššur was a significant player on the international scene, as a trading post with widespread interests across the Near East, it was not the capital of a major territorial state. Its citizens operated a long distance commercial enterprise, with branches reaching south to northern Babylonia, eastwards towards the Zagros, and then, most strikingly, northwestwards over the barrier of the Taurus mountains to the network of cities which dominated the Anatolian plateau at this time, primarily Kaneš (Kültepe in Cappadocia), but also others. This extensive commercial network did not survive disruptions in the 17th to 16th centuries BC, and in the 15th century BC Aššur itself was for a while under the hegemony of the recently formed Mittanian kingdom, along with cities like Arrapḫa (modern Kerkuk) and Nuzi across the Tigris to the east.¹ In a process for which we have very little direct evidence, Aššur gradually emerged from Mittanian and perhaps also Kassite domination, and asserted itself as a regional power: King Aššur-uballiṭ (1363–1328) famously sought and then claimed recognition from the pharaoh in two of the Amarna letters.² Assyrian documents from this time remain scarce, and are principally private legal transactions concerned with land acquisition in the vicinity of Aššur, and not until the 13th century BC do we see significant numbers of texts deriving from the practice of government. Assyria in the 13th century was ruled by just three kings, Adad-nirari I, Shalmaneser I and Tukulti-Ninurta I, under whom the territory directly administered from Aššur was greatly

¹ See Chapter 7. These are probably the two most important Mittanian cities in the trans-Tigris region between the Lower Zab and the Diyala, but few texts have come from Kerkuk, and a large archive was found at a third site excavated by an Iraqi team at Tell al-Fahḫar, probably a *dimtu* in the territory of Kurruḫanni (see Kolinski 2001).

² An excellent summary of the evidence for the early years of the Middle Assyrian state is given in Tenu 2009.

expanded.³ Thus it is that not only at the capital of Aššur, but also at a number of towns within the newly established boundaries of the “land of Aššur”, archaeologists have unearthed collections of cuneiform tablets, some small and some very numerous, which were produced by, and so bear witness to, the activities of the Assyrian administration.

The Royal Palace

To appreciate how the scribes, or perhaps we should say the literate administrators,⁴ of the Assyrian state ran their country, we need to have an idea of the society as a whole and of the fundamental economic conditions under which they operated. The government itself was centred on the royal palace, both as a building and as an institution, and the palace, *ēkallu*, makes its appearance in the documentation owning, distributing and receiving people and commodities, so it is there that our survey of the land of Aššur will start. The palace was by definition a residence of the king, and at any time in the second millennium, except for a brief episode when Tukulti-Ninurta moved to his new foundation at Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, the king’s primary residence was at the traditional capital, Aššur. It was not always on the same site. Andrae’s team recovered the Middle Assyrian plan of the “Old Palace” constructed above its early second-millennium predecessor, more or less immediately west of the Aššur Temple. This may have been the “palace of Aššur-nadin-aḫḫe”, presumably built by the king of that name who ruled at the beginning of the 14th century. When in 13th- to 12th-century texts we meet the “New Palace” this presumably refers to the large structure erected by Tukulti-Ninurta in the north-west corner of the old city, of which only the platform survived.⁵ And this may not be all, since one of Tukulti-Ninurta’s palace edicts refers to “palaces in the environs of the Inner City” (*ša li[bīt] Libbi-āli*).⁶

The Palace as a Residence

With the construction of new palaces, the older ones may have ceased to function as the king’s primary residence, although they would surely have remained as part of the royal establishment. Despite the absence of any documentation excavated in one of the palaces at Aššur, it seems likely that an extensive royal family would also have been housed in the same building or complex. The first queen herself was referred to as “the woman of the palace” or even just “the palace”,⁷ while the Court and Harem Edicts (discussed later in this chapter) mention “women of the palace”, who presumably include other “wives of the king” (*aššāt šarri*)⁸ and

³ For their approximate dates see Appendix 1.

⁴ For the difficulties of defining the precise role of the scribes within the administration see pp. 50–1.

⁵ Weidner 1954–6, 259.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 274, l. 42.

⁷ Cf. Postgate 2001c.

⁸ See Weidner 1954–6, 261.

“concubines”.⁹ In addition we know these ladies were served by slave women (*amtu*). In the 12th century Archive of Mutta, we meet some of the royal women of differing status and some of the royal children (although in this particular instance perhaps they were not strictly in the king’s harem but that of his regent, Ninurta-tukul-Aššur).

The Court and Harem Edicts confirm the obvious assumption that access to the palace, especially the domestic sector, was tightly controlled. The concept of the “palace precincts” seems to be expressed with the phrase *kalzi ēkalli*, using a word so far only encountered in this context in both Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian times, but without obvious Akkadian etymology.¹⁰ The gatekeepers (*etû, utû*, Weidner 1954–6, 265) no doubt admitted or excluded visitors, while the official called the *rab sikkāti* was probably the “key-holder” for doors kept locked,¹¹ but these will normally have been storerooms of one kind or another, as doors through which human traffic regularly passed would not have been sealed with the peg-and-clay sealing system. Fulfilling their duties effectively was evidently important, as the edicts show.

From an Edict of Tiglath-pileser I

*šum-ma lu-ú GAL É.GAL-lim [š]a URU ŠÀ URU
lu-ú NIMGIR É.GAL-lim lu-ú GAL za-ri-qi^{mes}
ša hu-ú-li lu-ú a-su-ú ša be-ta-[a-]nu ù lu-ú
ša UGU É.GAL.MEŠ-te [š]a šid-di KUR-ti gab-bu
ma-zi-iz pa-ni la-a mar-ru-ra a-na É.GAL-lim
ul-te-ri-bu ur-ki-[i]š e-ta-am-ru [š]a^{li} qe-pu-te^{mes}
an-nu-ú-te 1.TA.ÀM GÌR.MEŠ-šu-nu ú-ba-at-tu-qu*

If either the Palace Overseer of the Inner City or the Palace Herald or the Chief Usher of the road, or the Privy Doctor, or a Supervisor of all the Palaces across the extent of the land, has allowed an uncastrated courtier to enter a palace and later they have found (him), they shall sever one foot of (each of) these representatives.

Weidner 1954–6, No. 20, Tafel XI, 23–6.

Some of the edicts refer to behaviour while the royal court is on the road: in this situation the palace overseer obviously is not present, and the responsibility for the conduct of the court is in the hands of the “chief usher of the road” (*rab zāriqī ša hūli*, Edict No. 20, just quoted). That the court did move around the country is vividly demonstrated by letters found at Durkatlimmu dealing with the arrangements for the arrival of King Tukulti-Ninurta. The party includes six wagons transporting a variety of female members of his household, including the queen, two of her sisters, thirteen other women who are either “our own ladies” (DUMU.MUNUS.MEŠ SIG₅ *ni-a-tu*) or Kassite ladies, two flour-processers (*alahhinātu*) and another woman of obscure function. The king himself and his party, including the Kassite king and his wife, are apparently still en route at Apku.¹²

⁹ Using the word *esirāte*, probably meaning “enclosed women”, which is also found in texts from Nuzi and Ḫattusa; Landsberger 1935–6, 144–5. Note how in the Šattiwaza treaty the ruler is allowed to take only one principal wife (the daughter of the Hittite king), but as many concubines (*esirāte*) as he chooses (Landsberger 1935–6, 145; Beckman 1996, 40).

¹⁰ For Neo-Assyrian see CAD K, 108b; the Middle Assyrian occurrence is in an edict of Aššur-uballit (Weidner 1954–6, 268; *Satzung* 1:4).

¹¹ For the “pegs” and the *rab sikkāti*, see Radner 2010.

¹² Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, No. 10.

The Palace as the Seat of Government

The palace, while serving as a residence, also accommodated a variety of the activities of government. It was the forum for the reception of individuals and delegations from home and abroad, provided storage for valuable items and offered some kind of work or living space for administrative personnel. Unfortunately, despite the recovery of the impressive plan of the “Old Palace”,¹³ the remains do not betray many clues to the use made of different sectors of the building, in particular, no palace administrative archives have been recovered from there, so this can only be an assumption, although the Archive of Mutta gives a snapshot of some of the visitors received at the site over the course of a year. There is no doubt, though, that institutionally the central state administration was carried out in the name of “the palace”. Thus state-owned commodities which are the subject of transactions are described as *ša ēkalli*, “belonging to the palace”, where in other commercial documents we would read the name of the owner or creditor. The “palace” is therefore an authority, a legal persona or abstract entity, as well as a physical establishment.¹⁴ Often this phrase is followed by *ša qāt* PN, “in the charge (lit. hand) of PN”, which gives us the name of the responsible official, who is thus acting as an employee of the palace. Some such employees have this role explicitly recognised in their titles: “palace scribe”, “palace overseer” (*rab ēkalli*), “Palace Herald” or “slave of the palace”, and some of them certainly were active on the premises of one or more palaces. Others, like the courtiers (*mazzaz pāni*), undoubtedly functioned in the palace, but they did not have this role regularly expressed in their titles. Moreover, other officials worked for the palace but not actually inside it: in the cases of the Chief Steward and of Mutta, who undoubtedly both handled palace business, there is reason to think neither of these officials actually operated within the four walls of an official palace, although their archives were found in adjacent areas. It is therefore very difficult to be sure how much of the palace’s business was transacted within the confines of the palace, if defined as a single building complex, and how many of the palace’s staff members or indeed how much of the palace’s property we should expect to find within its four walls.

Although, therefore, we have a number of administrative archives from Aššur at this time, these are in one sense or another “outliers” which illustrate branches of the state’s administration in action, such as the documents from the Chief Steward close to but not architecturally integrated with the palace building. The provenance of a variety of literary and scientific texts in the later debris in the north-eastern part of the city, from the Aššur temple westwards,¹⁵ suggests the palace(s) here may have housed a library, but because some of the state’s core administration was housed apart from the palace proper, it is hard to know which other sectors may also have been distributed elsewhere. It is conceivable that the bulk of administrative documentation was written in separate buildings, or, even if it was initially generated by scribes working in a palace, would have been transferred sooner or later to the “Tablet House”.¹⁶

¹³ See Miglus 1989; 2004.

¹⁴ Cf. Machinist 1982, 20, referring back to Garelli 1967.

¹⁵ See Pedersén 1986, 12–28 Archive N1.

¹⁶ See p. 49.

Provincial Palaces

Outside Aššur, the administration of the state was delegated to the governors appointed by the king, and they resided in and carried out their administration from provincial palaces.¹⁷ These are sometimes referred to collectively as “palaces across the extent of the land” (*ša šiddi māti*), as illustrated by this account of Tiglath-pileser I’s:¹⁸

É.GAL.MEŠ-te šu-bat LUGAL-ti
 ša ma-ḥa-za-ni GAL.MEŠ-te
 ša ši-di KUR-ti-ia gab-be ša iš-tu
 tar-ṣi AD.MEŠ-ia i-na MU.MEŠ-te
 dan-na-te um-da-ši-ra-ma e-na-ḥa-ma
 i’-ab-ta DÜ-uš ú-šek-lil
 BĀD.MEŠ KUR-ti-ia an-šu-te
 ak-še-er GIŠ.APIN.MEŠ i-na nap-ḥar KUR^da-šur
 gab-be ú-šēr-ki-is ù ta-ab-ka
 ša ŠE-im^{mes} a-na ša AD.MEŠ-ia
 lu ú-ter lu at-bu-uk
 su-gul-lat ANŠE.KUR.RA.MEŠ GU₁.MEŠ ANŠE.MEŠ
 ša i-na GIŠ.TUKUL-ti^da-šur EN-ia
 i-na KUR.KUR.MEŠ ša a-pe-lu-ši-na-ti
 ki-šit-ti qa-ti-ia
 šá al-qa-a ak-šur

I completed the (re)construction of the palaces, royal residences, of the great cities throughout the whole extent of my land, which from the time of my fathers in years of hardship had been abandoned, dilapidated and destroyed. I repaired the weakened ramparts of my land. I had ploughs harnessed in the entire land of Aššur, and I stored up storage of grain in excess of that of my fathers. I formed herds of horses, oxen and donkeys, which I had received as the spoil of my own hands with the support of Aššur my lord in the countries which I rule.

Grayson 1991, 26 Col. vi.94–vii.4

At Ḥarbu (Tell Chuera), Durkatlimmu (Tell Sheikh Hamad) and Šibaniba (Tell Billa), state ownership of a commodity was consistently expressed by the phrase “of the palace”, and in each case the state archives were found in the palace, high on the principal mound near its steeply sloping edge. This was presumably the governor’s official residence, and we may reasonably assume many of the officials and scribes worked on the premises, if they did not actually sleep and eat there. By contrast, on Ili-pada’s farmstead at Tell Sabi Abyad on the river Baliḥ at the western extremity of the land of Aššur, although there is no doubt that the settlement and its administrators occupied the top of the mound, the establishment is not referred to as “the palace”, maintaining its status as, nominally at least, discrete from the state’s enterprise. This agrees with usage in the first millennium, when “the palace” (*ēkallu*)

¹⁷ This is perhaps the place to correct a false impression conveyed by my phrase “the government was in the hands of a number of ‘houses’ which ... were run along commercial lines” (Postgate 1979c, 202); this has been taken by Machinist (1982, 29–33) to imply that the power was in the hands of these houses, whereas my meaning was rather that the administration was in their hands. So I would not maintain that as a general rule “the Aššur families controlled the provincial government in oligarchic fashion”, although we cannot be sure this was never the case.

¹⁸ Similar but rather less elaborate statements were often included in their annals by his successors down to and including Shalmaneser III in the later 9th century, for example Tukulti-Ninurta II: “I built palaces across the extent of my land, and hitched ploughs across the extent of my land; I stored up in greater quantities than previously stores of grain for the needs of my land, and I added land to the land of Aššur and people to its people” (Grayson 1991, 178).

referred exclusively to the king's residences, and not to grand establishments built for highly placed members of the royal family or the government.¹⁹

Thus it is that although for some sectors of the state's administration there is an information vacuum at the centre, this can be filled in part by archives coming from the provinces, especially from Durkatlimmu and Tell Chuera, where most if not all government scribal activity would have been concentrated in a single building serving as the governor's residence, and would have been responsible for state programmes such as those described by Tiglath-pileser. However, before describing in detail the content of the different archives at Aššur and in the countryside, a brief survey of the land regime and social make-up of Assyria taken from a variety of sources will help to place the state's activities in context.

People

Since the information we meet in all state archives is either explicitly or implicitly a record of human actions and interactions, every archive contributes to our understanding of the agency of humans in the structure of the state, and an understanding of the role of different members of society is a necessary precondition for understanding the system as a whole.

Personal Identity and Origin

In Middle Assyrian scribal practice individuals' names are normally introduced by the single vertical wedge (*Personenkeil*) for male names and the female determinative (MUNUS) for women. Only in filiations immediately after DUMU ("son of") is the masculine determinative regularly, and after KIŠIB ("seal of") often, omitted. In private legal or commercial documents, individuals are normally given their father's, and sometimes also their paternal grandfather's name.²⁰ It is likely that the inclusion of the father's name signals "their social status as free-born",²¹ and the concept of a free man (*a'ilu*) is implicit in the Middle Assyrian Laws, where the wording may define the social status of a "woman" (*sinniltu*) by describing her as "the wife of a (free) man" or "the daughter of a (free) man" (e.g. Tablet A §2). In witness lists at the end of legal documents, witnesses are regularly given their father's name, and where this is omitted there is probably a reason. Thus in KAJ 51 (Postgate 1988a, No. 16) two of the witnesses have their patronymics as usual, whereas the first witness, Mannu-gir-Aššur, has no patronymic but is given the designation *aluzinnu*, one of a group of professions associated with cultic performances, sometimes rendered "juggler". Professions are mentioned only exceptionally in witness lists, and in this case his profession very likely substituted for a

¹⁹ See Postgate 2004b, 218b.

²⁰ Private legal documents may mention grandfathers, for example at Tell Billa and in the Babu-aḫa-iddina land sale texts (Freydank & Saporetti 1989, KAJ 158 and 159; here Nos. 31 and 36), or KAJ 7 from the 14th century Ass. 14446 archives. Presumably in most administrative contexts the identity of the individuals involved was fairly obvious, and grandparents' names must have been quite superfluous.

²¹ Phrase from Wiggermann 2000, 189 (though note that he is there talking about farmers he calls "free-born dependents").

patronymic because he did not belong to a normal patriarchal family and thus had no known father (or perhaps even mother).²²

In contrast to legal documents, in administrative texts and even in sealed bilateral documents from state archives patronymics are widely omitted.²³ Thus in the Babu-aḫa-iddina Archive only in the two land sale documents do we find the names of his father and grand-father given. The omission of patronymics can no doubt be attributed to two factors – the restricted social context in which administrative documentation was produced, which precludes doubts about the identity of the individuals involved, and the greater formality of the legal and commercial transactions which needed to hold their own in the context of public law. Unfortunately, we are not always as familiar as the scribes were with the social contexts, and the lack of filiations in the administrative archives is often frustrating.

Occasionally in both legal and administrative texts a person's home town or ethnic group will be mentioned rather than the father's name. Thus in KAJ 101, a sealed and witnessed document, a farmstead is named after Ninuayu, a Burudaeon, the ethnic term here substituting for a patronymic.²⁴ In their administrative records the government scribes did not practise any rigid consistency: in MARV 4.1, for instance, a list of “29 captured? workers” (ÉRIN.MEŠ *šabbutūtu*), some are just listed with their names, others are given a profession (“baker”, “gardener”, “goldsmith”, “priest” and an *aluzinnu*), and others receive an ethnic tag (*kaš-ši-ú*, i.e. Babylonian, or *šu-ub-ri-ú*, i.e. Hurrian); only one of them has a patronymic. Nomads or transhumants were predominantly of Aramaean stock, and are sometimes referred to merely as “a Sutilian”, without even their name recorded, but not infrequently the “Sutilian” after their names may be further qualified by a more specific tribal affiliation as in “Yurian Sutilian” or “Taḫabaeon Sutilian”.²⁵

Social and Legal Status

One rather special gentilic is “Assyrian” (*aššurāyu*, *aššurāyittu*), a term whose occasional usage has proved difficult to interpret. It was thought for a time, on the basis of occurrences

²² For *aluzinnu* in MA texts, see Jakob 2003, 465–6. The textual attestations for this term are discussed by Römer, and the lexical evidence in particular suggests that the *aluzinnu* was some kind of performer of the kind often associated with cultic activities, but does not tell us much about his social standing. It may be significant that in two Old Babylonian references (Römer 1975–8, 50) he is associated with work teams, and a role in providing “entertainment for the troops” would explain the appearance of *aluzinnu* in the lists of workers employed at Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, for which see Freydank 1976a, 116–18 (citing VAT 18007 and 18099). This would be along the lines suggested by Freydank (117³⁵), when he cites F. Hinkel's observation that in Sudan to this day one meets individuals whose task it is to give rhythm to a working party by singing, a phenomenon I observed myself at Al-Hiba in 1971 while a guest of Prof. Donald Hansen, when intensive work on removal of a large brick platform overlying an Early Dynastic temple was accompanied by one of the workmen singing, or rather keening, in a high nasal voice. For iconographic evidence (which may or may not relate to the *aluzinnu*), cf. Blocher 1992. Since then a number of mentions have emerged from the Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta workforce texts, often in the same context as soldiers (*ḫurād(āt)u*), runners (KAS₄.MEŠ) and builders (ŠITIM.MEŠ): MARV 4.91:19'; 4.42:9 (5 *a-lu-zi-ni*); 4.86:13' with envelope 4.29:3'; 4.102.iii.10'; 6.74:2 (3 *a-lu-zi-nu*; wrong Ass. no.?). 8.38:12.

²³ Compare at Nuzi: “in the legal records, Šar-Teššup's name is accompanied by the patronymic, whereas in the administrative documents the name usually appears alone” (Negri Scafa 2009a, 439⁸).

²⁴ Postgate 1988a, No. 55.

²⁵ See Postgate 1979b, 92–3; 1981, 51–4; Faist 2001, 186–7 citing customs receipts from Kulišhinaš for animals purchased from “a Sutilian” or “a Y(a)urian Sutilian” (in each case without even a personal name).

in the Middle Assyrian Laws, that it could refer to a social status with diminished legal rights, but this no longer seems likely.²⁶ Instead, it does seem to be used in legal documents to indicate persons with Assyrian ancestry, in contexts where they find themselves under legal or social constraints which are the result of economic distress rather than the consequence of being “Assyrian”. That being Assyrian was a significant and precise condition emerges from other documents, such as a sadly damaged text from the Stewards’ Archive which probably records proceedings presided over by Ušur-namkur-šarri, who held a range of high government posts under Tukulti-Ninurta I:

[¹]PAB– <i>nam-kur</i> –LUGAL ¹ IR ¹ [.....	Ušur-namkur-šarri x[.....
<i>a-ta-mar</i> ¹ PAB– <i>nam-kur</i> –[LUGAL	I saw. Ušur-namkur-šarri.....
<i>a-na pa-ni</i> ¹ DUMU.ÚS– ⁴ IM[before Apil-Adad[.....
ù DUMU.MEŠ URU ša ^{ur} te ² –[and the citizens of the city of Te[.....
<i>ul-ta-zi-za-a-n-ni ma-a</i> L[Ú [?]	made me stand, saying [.....
<i>ma-a áš-šu-ra-iu-ú a-na-ku-ma</i> a [?] –[.....	“I am Assyrian [.....]
<i>ki-i áš-šu-ra-iu-ú a-na-ku-ni</i> x[.....	that I am Assyrian [and that.....]
<i>an-na-bi-da-ni aq-ti-bi</i> [I fled, I said. [.....]
¹ PAB– <i>nam-kur</i> –LUGAL <i>a-na</i> KUR ⁴ <i>a-šur</i> ^k [¹	Ušur-namkur-šarri [brought me (back)] to Assyria.”

MARV 3.63:4’–12’

Fragmentary though this is, it seems to show clearly that the point at issue was the speaker’s status as “an Assyrian”, a fact which could be established, after which he may have perhaps been repatriated by the good offices of Ušur-namkur-šarri. Of course “Assyrian” was also used where the person’s precise status was not so central: another Assyrian fugitive (*munnaḫdu*) is mentioned in MARV 4.30 rev., fleeing either to or from Karduniaš (Babylonia), and we find Assyrians in a general sense alongside other gentiles such as “Sutians” or “Šubrians”.²⁷ The statement that “I seized the donkey in the hands of an Assyrian” shows that Assyrians must have differed in some recognisable way from others (such as Sutians, perhaps).²⁸ More difficult to interpret is the mention of several chests of tablets in the family archive of Urad-Šerua recording various categories of debts incumbent on Assyrians (e.g. sheep: 1 *qu-pu* UDU. MEŠ ša UGU *áš-šu-ra-ie-e*). Given that this family was based at Aššur, one might be tempted to think this meant “inhabitants of the city of Aššur”, but with nothing other than the syllabic rendering of the gentilic /*aššurāyu*/ (and no preceding logogram for “city”) it is hard to see how this would have been differentiated from the more general ethnic or geographical designation implying “inhabitant of Assyria”. By contrast, KAV 217, recording statements made in a legal context, involves “Aššur-ians” who had taken an oath to the king: there are two mentions of a group, written URU ⁴*a-šur-a-iu*.MEŠ (ll. 10’, 16’), and one of a single

²⁶ In this I concur with Roth 1995, 192 note 1, citing Driver & Miles 1935, 284–6, who does not agree that persons designated Assyrian “were members of a class socially, legally or economically inferior to the *a’ilu*” (so still Cardascia 1969, e.g. p. 301). She concludes: “The distinction is not borne out in the provisions in the MAL that refer to the *aššurāju*, ... or in other contemporary Middle Assyrian texts.”

²⁷ For example at Tell Chuera: Jakob 2009 No. 9:6 “1 Sutilian ... and 1 Assyrian with him” (1 *áš-šu-ra-iu il-te-šu*), or No. 13:35 “either Assyrian or Babylonian” (*lu-ú áš-šu-ra-iu-ú lu-ú kaš-[ši-ú]*).

²⁸ Hall 1983, 19.

“Aššur-ian” (URU ^a*a-šur-a-iu* l. 13’). The presence of URU here in all three instances suggests that it was not a mere determinative, but stands for *āl(u)*,²⁹ indicating that this specifically means citizens of the city of Aššur and should be distinguished from plain *aššurāyu*, which would have a wider meaning.³⁰ While being Assyrian was evidently a recognisable and at times important status, it is hard for us to know what range of meanings it might encompass, and we should perhaps resist the temptation to assign it one precise value in all contexts. This is particularly frustrating in the case of the “payments of the Assyrians” listed in the Aššur Temple Offerings Archive, although there too the gentilic */aššurāyu/* is conspicuous for its lack of either KUR or URU preceding.

Debt Slavery

While it is possible that “Assyrian” carried with it the implication of “free-born citizen of Aššur” or “of Assyria”, it is not clear how this would relate to the concept of “(free) man” (*a’īlu*). However, *a’īlu* (and probably *a’iltu* “(free) woman”, although this is not at present attested in Middle Assyrian sources) should be understood to contrast with “slave” (*urdu*), in its technical sense, and *amtu* “female slave”. The existence of household slaves is demonstrated by legal sale documents in which ownership of a male or female slave is transferred from seller to purchaser, and by Tablet A of the Middle Assyrian Laws where *urdu* and *amtu* are mentioned together and plainly belong together in a legally recognised category distinct from the free man (*a’īlu*) and his wife and daughter.

Some of these slaves will be normal chattel slaves working in a household and quite possibly born to parents in the same circumstances. However, private legal documents provide clear evidence for the existence of a range of servile conditions which did not amount to full slavery, and were usually related to debt. When taking a loan it was normal for the debt to be secured by a pledge, and this was mostly either land or a person, both referred to in Middle Assyrian as *šapartu*.³¹ Failure to repay in accordance with the contract could lead to at least temporary servitude, and there is also the possibility that the debtor would immediately begin a period of service in the creditor’s household in lieu of interest. Two documents referring to release from such circumstances serve to illustrate some of the various situations attested.

²⁹ Though with Assyrian dialect one must be cautious about accepting automatically the Babylonian value of logograms, syllabic writings like *a-la-iu-ú* (KAJ 7) tend to confirm *ālu* as the value of URU.

³⁰ See Freydank 1992b for the edition of this text; he does not go into the precise implication of “Assyrian” in this text, however.

³¹ The Middle Assyrian pledge documents were first seriously studied by Koschaker, whose work was summarised and extended by Eichler (1973, 88–95). For a comprehensive study see now Abraham 2001. We must presumably allow for the existence of many loans which were secured not by land or person, for which written documentation would be needed in the case of a consequent transfer of ownership, but by movable property which required no such title deeds. See now Saporetto 2012.

KAJ 7: Marriage of Freed Woman

KIŠIB ^{munus}*a-su-at*-^d[IDIGNA ()]

[^{munus}*a-su-at*-^d]IDIGNA DUMU.MUNUS Ṛx x¹
 [1DINGIR]-*m[a]-i-ri-ba* ĪR ša ^{1.d}MAR.[TU-*na*]-šir
iš-tu Ê ^{1.d}*a-šur-re-šú-ia*
 DUMU Ī.GÁL-DINGIR *ip-tu-ra-š[i?]*
a-na KA-š*a-ma* ša ^{munus}*a-su-at*-^dIDIGNA
 1DINGIR-*ma-i-ri-ba* ĪR ^{1.d}MAR.TU-*na-šir*
i-na a-mu-[u]t-ti-ša uz-zak-ki-ši
a-na aš-šu-ut-ti-šu il-ta-ka-an
 1DINGIR-*ma-i-ri-ba mu-ut-ša*
 ù ^{munus}*a-su-at*-^dIDIGNA DAM-*sú*
a-di bal-tu-ni A.ŠĀ ù [i**ib**-bi] URU
pa-la-aḥ a-ḥa-iš e-pu-[šú]
ša i-na be-ri-šu-nu i-Ṛⁿ-[si-lu-n]i
 3 MA.NA *šar-pa* [i-ḥi-aṭ]
ki-i-mu-ú [
i-na a-mu-ut-ti
 ù *a-na aš-šú-ut-ti*
iš-ku-nu-ši [
^{munus}*a-su-at*-^d[IDIGNA]
 ù *li-da-nu-[ša* ()]
a-la-iu-ú ša ^{1.d}MAR.T[U-*na-šir*]
 ù DUMU.MEŠ-šú *šu-nu* [()]
il-ka ša a-la-iu-ú-t[i]
a-na ^{1.d}MAR.TU-*na-šir*
 ù DUMU.MEŠ-šú *il-lu-ku*
 ù ^{1.d}MAR.TU-*na-šir* ù DUMU.MEŠ-*[šú]*
^{munus}*a-su-at*-^dIDIGNA ù *li-da-ni-[ša]*
a-na a-mu-ti ù *ur-du-ti la i-ša-[bu-tu]*
 ù *tup-pu ša* NA₄.KIŠIB ^{1.d}*a-šur-re-šú-ia*
ša ip-ti-ri ša ^{munus}*a-su-at*-^dIDIGNA
ša za-ka-i-ša i-na Ê
^{1.d}MAR.TU-*na-šir-ma ša-ak-na-at*
 (witnesses and date)

Seal of Asuat-Digla [()]

(space for seal impression)

[Asuat]-Digla, daughter [of Nirbiya] –
[Ilu]ma-iriba, slave of Amur[ru-na]šir

released her from the house of

Aššur-rešuya, son of Ibašši-ilu.

With the consent of Asuat-Digla herself

Iluma-iriba, slave of Amurru-našir,

has cleared her from her slavewoman status,
and appointed her to the status of his wife.

Iluma-iriba is her husband,

Asuat-Digla is his wife.

They shall show respect for one another

in countryside and town so long as they live.

Whoever intervenes between them

[shall pay out] three minas of silver.

In return for [they have cleared her]

from her slavewoman [status], and

have appointed her to the st[atus of a wife].

Asuat-Digla

and her offspring [()]

are the villagers of Amurru-[našir]

and his sons.

For Amurru-našir

and his sons they shall perform

the state service of villager-status,

but Amurru-našir and [his] sons shall

not sei[ze] Asuat-Digla and [her] offspring

for slavewoman status or slave status.

And the tablet with the seal of Aššur-rešuya,

concerning the release-payment of Asuat-Digla

for her clearance, is deposited in the house

of the same Amurru-našir.

This “tablet with the seal of Aššur-rešuya” must be Ass. 14446ce published as KAJ 167. It is from the same year (and very likely written 3 days earlier although the month name in KAJ 7 is broken), and acknowledges his receipt of the release payment paid by Iluma-iriba for Asuat-Digla, in the form of another woman, either named Šubrittu or simply described as “a Šubrian woman”, which was evidently a precondition of the marriage contract. It gives a few further details which enlarge the picture: Asuat-Digla’s father was called Nirbiya, and she was an Assyrian (*aššurāyittu*) who had been taken into the household of Aššur-rešuya under a “keep alive and take” arrangement (*balluṭ ū liqi*).³²

³² *Balluṭ u liqi* should perhaps be taken as a pair of substantives in the status absolutus (cf. von Soden AHw 555b who assigns this as a hapax to liqu II).

Taken together these two documents attest to the existence of an economically deprived sector of Assyrian society made up of originally free citizens obliged by poverty to tie themselves to richer families. Asuat-Digla was probably placed by her parents in the household of Aššur-rešuya under an arrangement familiar from other periods of Mesopotamian history and frequent enough to be treated in the Middle Assyrian Laws (Tablet A §39), whereby the receiving family undertook to support (*ba/ullu(m)* “to keep alive”) a child in return for exercising some rights over it.³³ She is here allowed to contract a marriage with a slave in the household of Amurru-našir, but although they are not to be his slaves, they will be his “villagers”, and this implies that they will be liable to perform the state service (*ilku*), presumably attached to the land they will cultivate on behalf of the Amurru-našir family.³⁴ That she will be under some legal constraint from Amurru-našir follows unequivocally from the fact that it is he who will be retaining in his house the tablet recording her release and it is she who has to roll her seal on KAJ 7 to signify her assent to the contract.

A different type of economic servitude is illustrated by another document from Ass. 14446 in which Amurru-našir is involved, published as MARV 1.37. The essence of this text is also worth quoting in full.

KIŠIB ^dMAR.TU–PAB

(seal impression)

^{1.d}UTU–*am-ra-ni* DUMU *e-rib*–DINGIR

i-na mi-ig-rat ra-mi-ni-šu

a-di 10 MU.MEŠ *i-na É* ^{1.d}MAR.TU–PAB

DUMU ^{1.d}*a-šur-i-qī-ša ú-šab*

DAM–*ta ú-ša-aḫ-ḫa-zu*

i-na É ^{1.d}MAR.TU–PAB–*ma*

e-kal ul-ta-ba-aš

10 MU.MEŠ *ú-šal-lam-ma*

DAM–*sú la-bu-ul-ta*

ù ra-ki-il-ta

i-laq-qé ù it-ta-lak

ša i-na be-ri-šu-nu i-pa-si-lu-ni

5 MA.NA *šar-pu*

Ī.LÁ.E

(witnesses and date)

Seal of Amurru-našir

Šamaš-amranni, son of Erib-ili,

of his own volition

will dwell for 10 years in the house

of Amurru-našir son of Aššur-iqiša.

They will let him marry a wife

and in the house of Amurru-našir

he will eat and be clothed.

(When) he has completed 10 years

he will take his wife, clothing,

and *rakiltu*,³⁵

and depart.

Whoever intervenes between them

shall pay out 5 minas of silver.

MARV 1.37:1–16

As suggested in an earlier edition and discussion of this transaction,³⁶ this seems to be a case where both sides benefit, and Amurru-našir’s seal on the tablet means that it will furnish Šamaš-amranni with a guarantee that he will receive his reward after completing the 10 years. There may of course have been a second document sealed by Šamaš-amranni which might be

³³ See Oppenheim 1955, 71–5.

³⁴ See for the “villagers” CAD A/I, 391, and pp. 21–7 for the *ilku* system.

³⁵ The meaning is not known. CAD R, 108–9 is uncertain but suggests “bundle” (lit. “tied (container)”). In 1979b, 93 I translated “contract(?)” but also raised the possibility that it could mean “equipment, accoutrements” or the like.

³⁶ Postgate 1979b, 93–5.

more explicit in specifying what services Amurru-našir could claim in return from Šamaš-amranni. Arrangements of this kind are not unique to Assyria: there is a strong resemblance to the story of Jacob and Laban in the Old Testament, and the *tidennūtu* contracts at Nuzi are concerned with contracts for personal service.³⁷ What this agreement and the situation in KAJ 7 and KAJ 167 have in common is that we see an originally free member of society – Asuat-Digla, or Šamaš-amranni – entering another household in a subservient status, and then in due course being released, either by a release payment or a 10-year limit built into the arrangement. However, in Asuat-Digla's case, the release is not absolute because she and her children will remain “villagers” (*ālāyū*) of Amurru-našir and his children, and are thereby obliged to perform the *ilku* duties attached to their status as dependent villagers, to all appearances in perpetuity.

Displaced Persons and Dependent Workers

From Aššur, but also from Tell Chuera and Durkatlimmu, we have a range of lists of family groups of dependent personnel, sometimes characterised as “booty” (*šallutu*)³⁸ or “deportees” (*našhūtu*). The deportation of the population from conquered territories was practised by the Hittite kings. In their royal inscriptions the Middle Assyrian kings mention it only very occasionally: Shalmaneser claims to have blinded and taken captive 14,400 people from Ḫanigalbat after defeating Šattuara, and Tukulti-Ninurta “uprooted” 28,800 “Hittites” from his campaign west of the Euphrates and moved them into “my land”.³⁹ Independent confirmation that such deportations did take place is provided by administrative documents concerned with the maintenance of large numbers of deportees.⁴⁰ During the reign of Shalmaneser one of the tasks of Melisaḫ and his son Urad-Šerua, as provincial governors, was to organise the distribution of barley rations from the local palaces to deportees on the upper Ḫabur.⁴¹ Many deportees were employed in the construction of Tukulti-Ninurta's new capital, Port Tukulti-Ninurta. Administrative texts recording the issue of grain rations to them (and to other works) were recovered from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, and some of these listing Hurrian families are analysed in detail in Freydank 1980. After Tukulti-Ninurta's conquest of Babylon, not only the Kassite king and his court, but also numbers of Kassite deportees found their way to Assyria. In a letter in a sealed envelope from the Archive of Ubrū addressed to a provincial governor we learn something of the conditions they experienced.⁴²

³⁷ Eichler 1973; Abraham 2001.

³⁸ As in KAJ 180 (Postgate 1988a, No. 70), and Tell Chuera No. 64 (see p. 287).

³⁹ Shalmaneser I: RIMA1 p. 184, 74–5 4 ŠĀR *bal-tu-ti-šu-nu ú-né-pil aš-lu-ul*. Tukulti-Ninurta I: RIMA 1, p. 275: 23–5 *i-na šur-ru GIŠ.GU.ZA MAN-ti-ia 8 ŠĀR ÉRIN.MEŠ ḫa-ti-i iš-tu e-ber-te ÍD pur-rat-ti as-su-ḫa-ma a-na ŠĀ KUR-ia ú-ra-a*. On the question of whether these captives were in fact blinded, see Garelli et al. (1982), who understand it to mean unskilled.

⁴⁰ And by Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta documents listed for example in Galter 1988, 228.

⁴¹ The relevant texts in the Urad-Šerua archive are fully treated in Saporetti 1970b; the texts are also edited in Postgate 1988a.

⁴² Pedersén archive M8 No. 53, from the jar found south-west of the younger city wall (bB6I); no. 146 in the edition of Llop-Radua 2009; the seal impression is also published there on Taf. 11.

a-na ¹*bal-<ti->-li-bur* EN-*ni*
tup-pí ¹*mu*-SIG₅-^d*a-šur*
ù ¹*i-gar-še-me-ed* ĪR.MEŠ-*ka*
nu-ul-ta-ka-in a-na di-na-an
EN-*ni ni-ta-lak*
a-na EN-*ni* GIŠ.GIGIR-*šu* ANŠE.KUR.RA.MEŠ-*šu*
ù pa-ḫi-te *ša* EN-*ni lu šul-mu*
an-na-ka a-na ĒRIN.MEŠ *kaš-ši-e*
ša i+na ^u*kal-ḫi us-bu-ni šul-mu*
^{1.d}UTU-KAR *it-tal-ka i+na* UD.5.KÁM
ŠUKU-*ta it-ti-din* 1 *šu-ši* 6 ANŠE 3BÁN 7½ SĪLA ŠE
ŠUKU ĒRIN.MEŠ *ša* EN-*ia* *ša* 1 ITI UD.MEŠ
ni-ta-ḫa-ar a-na É *ḫa-ši-me*
ni-ta-ba-ka *ši-pa-si-ni*
ni-ta-ḫa-aš la ni-di-na-šu-nu
ki-i *ša* EN-*ni*
i-ša-pa-ra-ni
šu-nu 1 SĪLA.TA.ĀM
2 ITI.TA.ĀM *i-la-qu-tu²-ni*
e'-ku-lu la ba-ri-ú
UZU 2-*šu iš-tu* ^u*ni-nu-a*
it-tab-lu-ni la i-di-nu-na-ši
ĒRIN.MEŠ *mar-šu-tu i-ba-aš-ši*
X-*ri-ti lib-bi e-ri-šu*
MUN *la-aš-šu áš-šum* ŠUKU-*at*
ĒRIN.MEŠ *ša* ITI *an-ni-e*
ša maḫ-ru-ú-ni
ni-da-na-šu-nu-ú
ki-i *ša* *ṭé-mu-ni* EN-*li*
li-iš-pu-ra
i+na lib-bi 3 ME 50 ĒRIN.MEŠ
ša ŠU EN-*ia* 4 LÚ.MEŠ *ša* KIN
2 LÚ.MEŠ *tal-mi-du*
3 LÚ.MEŠ *pír-su* 2 LÚ.MEŠ *ša* GAB
4 MUNUS.MEŠ *ša* KIN
1 MUNUS *tal-mi-tu* 4 MUNUS *pír-su*
ŠU.NÍGIN 19 ĒRIN.MEŠ *ša* ITI *kal-mar-te*
me-tu-ni ĒRIN.MEŠ *an-nu-tu*
mar-šu-tu *ša* ŠÀ GIŠ.MÁ
DUG LU LUGAL *la i-di-nu*

To Balti-libur our lord,
 Tablet of Mudammeq-Aššur
 and Igaršemed, your servants.
 We have done obeisance and in lieu
 of our lord have gone.
 With our lord, his chariot and his horses
 and the office of our lord may it be well.
 Here it is well with the Kassite people
 who are dwelling in Kalḫu.
 Šamaš-šezib came (and) issued
 ration(s) on the 5th day. We received 66.375
 homers of grain (as) rations for the people
 of my lord for 1 month (and) are storing it in
 the granary. We have applied our sealings and did
 not issue (it) to them – (we will do)
 however our lord sends (instructions).

They will collect¹ 1 *qú* each (daily²)
 for 2 months each;
 they are eating, not hungry.
 Twice they have brought meat
 from Nineveh. They did not give us (any).
 There are some sick people,
 they requested ... of heart (?).⁴³
 There is no salt. As for the rations of
 the people for this month,
 who/which have been received,
 shall we issue (them) to them?
 Let my lord send (instructions) in line
 with his decision.
 Out of 350 people who are in the charge
 of my lord: 4 men of work(ing age);
 2 male apprentices;
 3 males, weaned; 2 males unweaned;
 4 women of work(ing age);
 1 female apprentice; 4 females, weaned;
 Total: 19 people who died in the month
 of Kalmartu.
 These sick people inside the boat
 did not give ... the king

MARV 1.71

Although the text does not explicitly refer to these “Kassites” as deportees (*našḫūtu*), it seems clear that this is what they were. Evidently the state is concerned for their welfare, for

⁴³ The sign at the beginning of the line resembles *nir* or *šaḫ* but neither of these gives obvious sense.

whatever motive, and we may compare MARV 1.27 (+MARV 3.54), where a variety of recipients are on the receiving end of an issue of wool totalling 221 talents (about 6,630 kg) issued “on the command of the king as a gift (*ki-i ri-mu-ut-te*)” (l. 35). Most of the wool goes to three groups of deportees – Šubrians, Katmuḥæans and Nairians – but some goes to individual builders (LÚ.ŠITIM.MEŠ) and architects,⁴⁴ no doubt all engaged on work at the new capital, Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta.

The condition of deportee cannot have been a permanent status, and it seems likely that in most cases such people would have ended up as *šiluḥlu*, a word of Hurrian origin which refers to a class of dependent labourers, the significance of which has only gradually emerged over the past quarter century as fresh Middle Assyrian texts have been published, in particular those from Tell Sabi Abyad. There, on the extensive estate of Ili-pada in the Baliḥ valley, lists of workers fall into two categories: one is freeborn farmers, where, to quote Wiggermann, the names are practically all “good Assyrian”, and all have their father’s name listed, while the other category is dependent workers designated *šiluḥlu*, whose names are usually “foreign” and whose patronymic is not given.⁴⁵ When such groups of non-Assyrians – whether already *šiluḥlu* or still classed as booty or deportees, or even free families – are under the control (and also the care) of the state administration, the scribes devised a detailed and consistent terminology for describing both the adults and the children. In addition to the regular kinship terms which relate to a nuclear family: wife, widow, mother, mother-in-law, son, daughter, sister, brother, there is a fairly elaborate hierarchy of age groups.

An Elamite Family at Ḥarbu (Tell Chuera)

^{1.d} <i>šín-re-ma-ni</i> BAN	Sin-remanni, archer,
^{munus} <i>pi-il-ḥa-tu</i> DAM- <i>su šá</i> KIN	Pilḥatu his wife, of work(ing age),
¹ <i>ru-us-su-kar-du</i> DUMU- <i>šu</i> BAN	Russukardu his son, archer,
¹ KA- <i>šu-ṭa-a-bu</i> DUMU- <i>šu ša ku-kúl-li</i>	Pišu-ṭabu his son, <i>kukullu</i> boy,
^{munus} <i>ba-bi-šar-ri</i> [DUM]U.MUNUS- <i>su tal-mi-[tu]</i>	Babi-šarri his daughter, apprentice,
^{munus} <i>nap-še-ri-um-mi</i> [K]I.MIN <i>pír-su</i>	Napšeri-ummi ditto, weaned,
^{1.d} <i>šín-KAM</i> [D]UMU- <i>šu</i> KI.MIN	Sin-ereš his son, ditto.
1 ANŠE 3BÁN ŠE	1.3 homers of grain.

Jakob 2009, No. 70:8–15

According to this passage, the male head of the family is designated as an archer, with his adult wife classified as *ša šipri* “of work”. In text No. 72 from Tell Chuera, the same family is listed, and there the eldest son, Russukardu, is classified as *ušpu* “sling(er)”.⁴⁶ Younger adolescent males are described as *ša kukulli*, a word whose meaning is uncertain but which

⁴⁴ *ša-lim-pa-ie-e*, in ll. 21, 33; see Freydank 1985b and Jakob 2003, 461–5 for this term.

⁴⁵ Wiggermann 2000, 189. Note that the heads of Elamite families at Tell Chuera are not given their patronymics. We are probably not entitled to conclude from this alone that they were *šiluḥlu*.

⁴⁶ See Postgate 2008 for this term and for the reading of BAN “archer” (not ŠITIM “builder”) for the heads of family.

Table 2.1. *Age designations*

Male		Female	
BAN (=qaltu?)	bow(man)	<i>šēbat</i>	old
<i>ušpu / ša ušpi</i>	sling(er)	<i>ša KIN (=šipri)</i>	of work(ing age)
<i>ša kukulli</i>	box? man		
<i>talmīdu</i>	apprentice	<i>talmittu</i>	apprentice
<i>tāriu</i>	youth	<i>tārītu</i>	youth
<i>pirsu</i>	weaned	<i>pirsu</i>	weaned
<i>ša GABA (=zīzi)</i>	breast fed	<i>ša GABA (=zīzi)</i>	breast fed

presumably refers to some weapon or work-tool comparable to the bow.⁴⁷ Adolescent females are called “apprentice” (and in other texts we have the equivalent term *talmīdu* for boys of this age). Young children are “weaned” (*pirsu* for both boys and girls).

This does not exhaust the terminology in use. From two very large tablets from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta listing deported families with their possessions, one short section will illustrate some further terms:

A Hurrian Family at Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta

[¹]x x di⁷-ša [DU]MU-ša ta-ri-ú
¹ki-bi-šar-ri DUMU-ša pīr-su
¹a-gi-te-šu-up DUMU-ša šá GABA
 [^{mu}]mu-ut-tu-ri e-ma-si-na še-bat

[P]N her son, youth,
 Kibišarri her son, weaned,
 Agi-Tešup her son, at the breast,
 Mutturi, their mother-in-law, old.

MARV 4.89 Rs.v.42'–45'

This gives us another age group called *tāriu* or, for girls, *tārītu*, of uncertain meaning but slotting between the apprentices and the weaned children, and an unweaned infant classed as *ša GABA* “of the breast”, which may need to be read *ša zīzi*.⁴⁸ Taking all together we get the categories in Table 2.1.

This elaborate classification of the workers by age derives from the dual exploitative and pastoral concerns of the administration: on one hand, it was interested in the details of the labour force to establish how many hands it could call on for specific duties, and, on the other hand, it needed to know how many mouths it had to feed, that is the nutritional requirements of the families listed, because the purpose of these lists was to establish the volume of grain required to keep them alive, and/or to supply the officials with the evidence they needed to account for the amounts they disbursed. In some, perhaps all,

⁴⁷ Cf. Jakob 2009, 101, citing but not adopting two suggestions in Postgate 2008 (“quiver-holder” or “boy carrying a container of sling-stones”). In either case it could lexically belong with Babylonian *kakkullu* as initially proposed by Freydank.

⁴⁸ See Llop-Radua 2010b, 128–9.

cases, it may have been a transitional arrangement, before the families, if nominally free, were able to support themselves in due course from the output of their farming or other activities, or if *šiluhlu* became dependants of individual Assyrian houses or separate state organisations.

For understanding the social situation of the *šiluhlu*, one text in particular is significant, of which the third and final sections are quoted here:⁴⁹

i-na 150 ÉRIN.MEŠ *zi-ti* ¹*ub-ri*
 70 ÉRIN.MEŠ *a-di* 15 ÉRIN.MEŠ *te-li-te*
ša i-na ĞIR.MEŠ-*šu-nu e-ti-qu-ú-ni*
 54 ÉRIN.MEŠ LÁ.MEŠ *ša la-a ub-la-an-ni*
 26 ÉRIN.MEŠ *me-tu-tu*
 23 ÉRIN.MEŠ *še-le-na-iu-ú*
ša ¹DUMU-*ša-qi-e il-qe-ú-ni*
 ŠU.NÍGIN 173 ÉRIN.MEŠ *ša* ¹*ub-ri*
 ŠU.NIGIN 999 ÉRIN.MEŠ *ši-luh-lu*
ša DUMU.MEŠ ^dUTU-ŠEŠ-SUM-*na ša qe-pu-tu*
i-na URU.ŠĀ-*bi URU e-šu-ru-ú-ni*
 ITI *hi-bur* UD.4.KÁM *li-mu* ¹*a-šur-mu-šab-ši*
 DUMU ^d*a-nu-mu-šal-lim*

Out of 150 people, the inheritance share of Ubru:
 70 people, including 15 people increase²,
 who went past on foot;
 54 people missing, whom he did not bring;
 26 people, dead;
 23 people, Šelenaean,
 whom Mar-šaḳie took.
 Total: 173 people of Ubru.
 Grand total: 999 people, dependants,
 of the sons of Šamaš-aḫa-iddina, whom the
 representatives reviewed in the Inner City.
 Month of Ḫibur, 4th day, eponymate of
 Aššur-mušabši, son of Anu-mušallim.

MARV 1.6:20–32

This document may well have been drawn up in connection with the division of Šamaš-aḫa-iddina's estate, as the two opening sections of this text give the numbers of *šiluhlu* inherited by the two presumably older brothers, Ištar-ereš (565) and Qibi-Aššur (249). It demonstrates clearly that the rights exercised by the father over about 1,000 dependants were transferred to the next generation of his family. There is no wholly satisfactory English word to convey the meaning of *šābu* (ÉRIN.MEŠ): it is used as a general term for people en masse, male and female, young and old, without implying a precise social class but with the implication that they are under the control of others. Here a comparison with MARV 1.28, which lists some of the people taken into the houses of Ištar-ereš and Qibi-Aššur, reveals that their numbers included two women and a baby,⁵⁰ so that although one might be inclined to attribute the deaths listed to a military event, this text does not of itself provide evidence that the *šiluhlu* might be conscripted into the Assyrian army.

State Labour and Military Service

Given that adult and at least some adolescent male *šiluhlu* dependants are classified by their weapons – as archers or slingers – it seems likely that they would have been enrolled to fight on occasion, but our sources do not currently allow us to say if this would have come under the heading of *ilku* service: if it did, it might have been associated with the *ilku* obligations of their owners. There is no doubt that free members of society were at times

⁴⁹ On this text, and other related texts and issues see Postgate 2008, 84–6.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 85.

required to fulfil obligations of service for the state, referred to by the word *ilku*, but the basis for this obligation and how it was administered remain extremely difficult to extrapolate from the textual sources we have at present. Since a survey of the data in 1982, fresh evidence has become available and helps to fill out the picture, without necessitating any significant changes, but some of the underlying issues remain elusive. Succinctly, in the present state of our knowledge it seems true to say that (1) *ilku* could entail service in the military forces; (2) some (perhaps all) persons carrying out *ilku* duties did so for restricted time periods; (3) some (perhaps all) *ilku* obligations were associated with the tenure of land. In other words, we can “rule some things in”, but there are numerous possibilities we cannot rule out.

The first of these three propositions is the easiest to illustrate. Suggestive are the occasions when scribes list arrow(head)s intended for military service (*ša ilki*). These are no doubt of copper, and in MARV 5.47 we learn that the steward has taken delivery of “513 arrowheads, 1½ shekels each, for *ilku*” which three men “and the smiths have brought to the palace for their *ilku*”.⁵¹ From this we cannot tell if the “*ilku* arrows” were to be used by the persons delivering them, or, perhaps more likely, were a substitute payment from the coppersmiths for their personal service, but it does at least seem clear that some *ilku* service involved military activity. Comparable to this must be the cases where *ilku* is mentioned in association with horses, whose role was to draw battle chariots, and with other weapons or supplies appropriate to a military campaign. Three Aššur texts record the receipt of grain as “rations for (the) *ilku* horses” (ŠUKU-at ANŠE.KUR.RA(.MEŠ) *ša il-ki*),⁵² and a similar issue is recorded at Durkatlimmu: “12 homers by the old *sūtu*, rations for 2 *ilku* horses, for 4 months – they will eat at 5 *qū* each”.⁵³ At Tell al-Rimah (Karana or Qatara in the jezirah west of Nineveh), six small documents were found which all involved *ilku* obligations in different ways.⁵⁴ Grain as rations for horses is listed in TR 3023 and 2087, and these texts also list straw (IN.NU) and grease (IÀ), both probably intended for the horses, because we know from a Tell Sabi Abyad text that “pig’s fat” could be used as an ointment for horses.⁵⁵ TR 2087 also lists 53 minas of lead (AN.NA), which later in the text is specified as “[the le]ad, hire of a groom and the ho[rses]”,⁵⁶ and a sum of 30 or more minas of lead somehow associated with horses is also mentioned in TR 3006, where it has been received by a citizen (with patronymic) referred to as a *paḥnu*. That this word is likely to be the technical term for a substitute can be deduced from the other definite occurrence, in KAJ 307.⁵⁷

⁵¹ MARV 5.47:1–3 513 SAG.DU.MEŠ LIŠ-ta-ḫi.MEŠ šá 1½ GÍN.TA.ÂM *ša il-ki*, and 9–12 ù LÜ.SIMUG.MEŠ *ša il-k[i]-šu-nu a-na Ē.GAL-lim it-tab-lu-ni*; MARV 1.72: 2,000 arrows issued by the steward on the king’s instructions. (I remain uncertain whether the Assyrian form of *šiltāḫu* is *lišṭāḫu* or LIŠ should here be read *šil4*).

⁵² KAJ 233; 253; MARV 1.44. All three documents were sealed and KAJ 253 had an envelope (KAV 207).

⁵³ Röllig 2008 No. 69:26–7: ŠUKU 2 ANŠE.KUR.RA *ša il-ki ša 4 ITI UD.MEŠ 5 ŠILA.TA.ÂM e-ku-lu: 0.05 (qū) x 2 (horses) 30 (days per month) x 4 (months) = 12 (homers).*

⁵⁴ These are: TR 2021(+2051); 2087; 3005; 3006; 3010; 3023, see pp. 267–8; and Postgate 2002, 302–3 for more detail.

⁵⁵ T93–10, quoted in Postgate 2002, 306¹⁸, courtesy Frans Wiggermann.

⁵⁶ [AN.N]A *ig^l-ru ša LÜ.GIGIR ù AN[ŠE.KUR.RA(.MEŠ)]*, see Postgate 2002, 302.

⁵⁷ *pa-aḫ!-nu* is perhaps to be read in Billa No. 41:4 (Finkelstein 1953).

KAJ 307: Military Service Agreement⁵⁸

KIŠIB ¹ DI.KUD- ^{d7} .BI	Seal of Dayyan-Sebetti.
(space for seal impression)	
<i>iš-tu</i> ITI <i>al-la-na-te</i>	From the 1st of Allanate
UD.1.KÁM <i>li-me</i>	eponymate of
^{1d} <i>šál-ma-an-UR.SAG</i>	<u>Shalmaneser</u> :
⁵ ¹ KAM-DINGIR <i>pa-aḥ-nu</i>	Eriš-ili, the substitute ² ,
NÍG.KA ₉ ,MEŠ <i>iš-tu ma-da-te-šu</i>	has settled his accounts
<i>iš-ša-bat</i>	with his payment. ⁵⁹
ANŠE.KUR.RA <i>i-na pi-ti</i>	The horse will eat in the administrative
¹ KAM-DINGIR- <i>ma e-kal</i>	sphere of Eriš-ili himself.
¹⁰ <i>ul-ma ù ḥa-ši-na</i>	A lance and an axe
<i>a-na pa-aḥ-ni-šu-nu</i>	they did not give
<i>la i-di-nu</i>	to their substitute ² .
<i>iš-tu</i> UD- <i>me an-ni-e-ma</i>	From this same day
<i>mul-te-ši-tu-šu-nu</i> ša GIŠ.GIGIR	they themselves shall pay their outgoings
¹⁵ <i>ki pa-ni-ti šu-nu-ma i-da-nu</i>	on the chariot as previously
KIŠIB ^d IM- <i>ú-ma-^fi</i> ¹	Seal of Adad-uma”i
KIŠIB DUB.[S]AR	Seal of the scribe
IGI ^d <i>taš-me-tum-KUR-ni</i> DUB.SAR	Before Tašmetum-šaduni, the scribe,
DUMU <i>sin-SUM-šu-me</i>	son of Sin-nadin-šumi.
²⁰ KIŠIB ¹ <i>ta-ri-ba-te</i>	Seal of Taribatu.

This agreement, from the eponymate (and so probably the beginning of the reign) of Shalmaneser is evidently between Eriš-ili and other persons including Dayyan-Sebetti, who seals the top of the obverse; although the document is sealed and witnessed, it is relatively informal since patronymics are dispensed with (except for the scribe). Evidently Eriš-ili has been in a contractual relationship with Dayyan-Sebetti and company,⁶⁰ and both sides are here agreeing to the ongoing terms: there seems to be a single horse, which Eriš-ili will be responsible for feeding, and he is also expected to supply his own weapons, but as before “they” will continue to meet the outgoings on the chariot. Despite the uncertainties (e.g. how will he operate a chariot with a single horse? does he not have his own *ilku* obligations to fulfil?), it seems clear that Eriš-ili is contracting to serve as a substitute on a recurrent basis. A similar settling of accounts is attested at Rimah by TR 3010 “From the 11th of Ḥibur, eponymate of Adad-bel-gabbe (year 27), Abu-ṭab and Sikku have settled their accounts. Their *ilku* service is performed ‘in the hand of’ Sikku.”⁶¹ That this was a long-term relationship going back two

⁵⁸ Previous edition Postgate 1982, 305–6 with the benefit of collations from Dr. Freydank. For the PN in l. 16 see Freydank 2003a, 255.

⁵⁹ Since Eriš-ili is not likely to be making payments to Dayyan-Sebetti and his associates, this “payment” (*maddattu*) is perhaps a package of contributions made by them to maintain him while performing service (e.g. fodder, grease, perhaps wool etc.).

⁶⁰ Possibly Dayyan-Sebetti’s partners (brothers?) are Adad-uma”i and Taribatu, who both sealed the tablet but are not said to be witnesses.

⁶¹ TR 3010:1–8 *iš-tu* ITI.ḥi-bur UD.11.KÁM li-[*me*] ^{1d}IM-EN-*gab-be* ¹*a-bu*-[D]ÜG.GA *iš-tu* ¹*si-ki* NÍG.KA₉,MEŠ-*šu-nu* *ša-ab-tu il-la-ak-šu-nu i-na* ŠU ¹*si-ki a-li-ik*. For the concept of *ilku* service being “in the charge of” (*ina qāt*) someone,

decades is shown by TR 3023, dated to Aššur-nadin-šume (year 7),⁶² where Sikku receives the horse fodder, straw and grease for Abu-ṭab's *ilku*.

The specifically military nature of the *ilku* service referred to in these texts is indicated not merely by the horses, which imply chariots, but also by the weapons: in KAJ 307 the serving soldier apparently has to supply his own lance (*ulmu*) and axe (*hašinnu*). A lance was borrowed at Rimah by Šilli-Marduk in TR 2021+2051 (year 42, reign of Tukulti-Ninurta) and was to be handed back “at the return of” (or “from”) “the army” (*ina tuār ḫurādi*). This tablet does not mention *ilku*, but TR 3005 reads: “1.2² homers of grain, 3 *qû* reedbed-pig's grease, 3 minas wool, of the army of Niḫriya, who performed *ilku*-service with his brothers.”⁶³ Although sealed, this is a fairly informal administrative note, since it does not mention any personal names, but for us it is useful in adding wool to the list of items which might accompany someone doing military service, and in confirming that someone returning from the army might have been carrying out his (or someone else's) *ilku* service. Soldiers going, or rather not going, to serve in the army are also mentioned in a pair of closely similar Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta documents which make it clear that by the time of Tukulti-Ninurta, if not earlier, arrangements were in place for some citizens to supply men for the army from among their own slaves. This emerges from MARV 4.5, which although damaged can largely be reconstructed with the help of the very similar document MARV 4.6.

KIŠIB ¹ <i>ur-di</i> DUMU <i>i-du-ú</i> (seal impression here and over all surfaces) ⁶⁴	Seal of Urdu, son of Idu.
¹ <i>šil-lí</i> -[<i>x x x x x</i>] ÌR	Šilli-[...], the slave
¹ <i>ša</i> ¹ <i>ur-di</i> DUMU ¹ <i>i-du-ú</i>	of Urdu, son of Idu,
<i>ša a-na la-a a-la-ki</i>	whom Mudammeq-[Nusku], ⁶⁵ son
⁵ <i>ša</i> [<i>ḫu</i>]- <i>ra-di</i> ¹ <i>mu</i> -SIG ₅ -[⁴ NUSKA]	of Ibašši-ilu, arrested for not serving ⁶⁶
¹ DUMU Ì ¹ .GÁL-DINGIR <i>iš-ba-ta</i> - ¹ <i>šu</i> ¹ - <i>ni</i>	in the army,
<i>i-na</i> ^{uu} <i>ki-li-zi</i>	(and) will present before the king
<i>a-na pa-ni</i> LUGAL	in Kilizu.
[^ú -] <i>qar-r[u]</i> - <i>bu-ú-ni</i>	
¹⁰ [<i>x x</i>] <i>x x</i> ⁴ <i>a</i> - <i>x x</i> [<i>x x</i>]	(passage lost)
(about three lines lost)	
[<i>x x</i>] <i>x pa še pa</i> ² ÌR ²	[...]
¹⁵ [<i>ša tu</i>] <i>p-pu-šu</i> <i>ša-bi-it-t[a]</i>	whose ² formally executed tablet they ²
[<i>i+na</i> ²] É.GAL- <i>lim ú-kal-lu-ni</i>	are keeping [in ²] the palace
[<i>x x x</i>] <i>x a-na</i> ¹ <i>ur-di</i>	[...] is entrusted to Urdu, his master ² ,
[E]N ² -š[<i>u</i> ²] <i>a-na bal-lu-ti</i>	to be maintained (lit. kept alive).
[<i>pa</i>]- <i>qi-id i+na a-lak</i> LUGAL	On the arrival of the king
²⁰ <i>ú-ba-la</i>	he shall bring (him)

compare KAJ 246, which states that “PN₁ has received 4 months 20 days in the charge of (*ša* ŠU) PN₂” (the connection with military service being assured by *ša ḫu-ra-di* in l. 6).

⁶² That is, year 7 in Röllig's sequence, see Appendix 2.

⁶³ 1 ANŠE 2²-BÁN <<ŠE>> ŠE-um 2 3 ŠILA IÀ ŠAḪ.GIŠ.GI 3 3 MA.NA SÍG.MEŠ 4 *ša ḫu-ra-di* 5 *ša* ^{uu}*ni-iḫ-ri-a* 6 *ša il-ka* 7 *iš-tu* ŠEŠ.MEŠ-*šu* 8 *i-li-ku-ni*.

⁶⁴ Seal impression: Fischer 1999, 146 Nr. 27.

⁶⁵ Restored after MARV 4.6:8.

⁶⁶ Note the equivalent phrase in MARV 4.6:7 *a-na la-la-ki* *ša ḫu-ra-di*.

<i>ú-[ša²-]za-az ù tup-p[u-šu]</i>	and) make him be present,
<i>i-ḥap-pi</i>	<u>and may break his tablet.</u>
<i>šúm-ma i+na tu-ar ḥu-r[a-]di</i>	If on the return of the army
LÚ ¹ la-a it-tab-la	he has not brought the man,
²⁵ 3 ÉRIN.MEŠ-šu a-na É.GAL-lim	they shall take three of his people
<i>i-laq-qe-ú</i>	for the palace.
ITI ḥi-bur [UD.x+] ³ .[KÁM li-mu]	Month of Ḥibur, [day x+] ³ [eponymate]
¹ ur-d[u]	of Urd[u ...]

MARV 4.5

Evidently in both these texts Assyrian citizens (Urdu, son of Idu in No. 5, and two sons of Šamaš-mušabši of the city of Ḥiššutu in No. 6) are expected to have sent a slave to the army, but he has for some reason not materialised. He has, however, been arrested by Mudammeq-Nusku, who must be acting on behalf of the military authorities, and the owners are now bound over to keep the slave until he can be brought before the king when he arrives at Kilizu, perhaps on his return from campaign. What fate awaits the slave who has presumably shirked a dangerous expedition, we are not told; but if the owners fail to deliver him, it sounds as though they will have to provide the palace with three other persons, perhaps in perpetuity.

We cannot be certain that the use of the verb *alāku* “to serve”, for the obligation which the slaves and their owners faced, of itself means that it technically was indeed *ilku* service, but in this instance it seems likely, especially since in MARV 4.6 the obligation apparently rests on two brothers and is presumably therefore inherited. In other instances it may well be that going to the army is the consequence of other arrangements. A case in point may be MARV 4.119, a tablet relating to serving soldiers and sealed by the provincial governor of the land of Katmuḥu on the northern frontier, in which he is apparently signifying his acceptance of an edict. The text begins:

[KI]ŠIB ^{1,4} b[e]-er-iš-ma-ni (seal impression)	Seal of Ber-išmanni.
^{1,4} be-er- iš-ma-ni	Ber-išmanni,
DUMU ^d be-er-EN-li-i-t[e]	son of Ber-bel-li'ite,
EN pa-ḥi-te ša KUR kat-mu-ḥi	governor of the land of Katmuḥu –
⁵ LUGAL ur-ták-ki-is-[u]	the king has bound him over,
ma-a ÉRIN.MEŠ BAN a-li-ku-t[u]	saying: The bow troops who are
ša ḥu-ra-dī ša i-na ḥal-zi	serving in the army who are in the province
^{ur} kur-da ḥal-zi ^{ur} ad-da-riq	of Kurda, the province of Addariq,
ḥal-zi ^{ur} GEŠTIN.NA ḥal-zi ^{ur} ap-ki	the province of Karana, the province of Apku,
¹⁰ ḥal-zi ^{ur} ši-mu i-na KUR ka x n[i] ni	the province of Šimu, the land of ...,
ḥal-zi ^{ur} ḥa-šu-a-ni	the province of Ḥašuanī,
ḥal-zi ^{ur} ši-ma-ni-[ba]	the province of Šimani[ba],
ša URU.DIDLI-šu-nu a-[na (...)]	whose villages sent them to [...]
qe-pu-te[(-šu-nu ?)]	of [their] representatives ...
¹⁵ [i]š-pu-ru-[ú-ni]	
(broken passage)	

MARV 4.119:1–15

The point at issue is apparently that soldiers in the provinces named should not make their way into the province of Katmuḫu: “If one single server in the army, from his province or their² village, or while on leave, should enter the land of Katmuḫu, the king has sworn on the life of Aššur his god, they shall leave Ber-išmanni [...]”⁶⁷

While it seems certain that people who “serve in the army” are incorporated in the military, we cannot be certain that they are necessarily performing *ilku* service. The phrase could possibly apply to persons serving in another capacity. For instance, if it was normal for an *ilku* soldier to go on campaign with a lance and an axe, then perhaps the “bow troops who are serving in the army” are in a different category. As we have seen, the adult males among the deported families are described as “bowmen” (BAN), with more junior members classed as “slingers” (*ša ušpi*), and it is obviously possible that they would be incorporated in the army at times, even though they can hardly have themselves incurred *ilku* obligations through land tenure. This might explain why some persons are expected to supply the administration with large numbers of arrowheads (see earlier section in this chapter on MARV 5.47), perhaps as a substitute payment for serving themselves in person.

This is no more than speculation, and unfortunately the terminology of military ranks and conscription is complex and remains rather opaque.⁶⁸ We already have persons performing *ilku*, sometimes involving military service in view of their equipment. We have the word *hurādu*, which certainly refers to military enterprises, sometimes specifying the geographical goal of a campaign, but which can also refer to an individual soldier.⁶⁹ Further, though, we have a class of persons called *šāb šarri* (ÉRIN.MEŠ LUGAL). They are mentioned as recipients of government-issue military uniforms,⁷⁰ and in Neo-Assyrian times they appear to be those persons conscripted for *ilku* who enter the army, as opposed to those assigned to civilian duties. There is a list of 150 “king’s troops” on MARV 2.1, who have linguistically Assyrian names and patronymics, and are sometimes accompanied by sons or brothers, which would all fit well with our understanding of the traditional *ilku* system. However, in the documentation from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta “king’s troops” are found feeding women (MARV 4.31) or building boats (MARV 4.34) – but this use of military contingents may of course be a consequence of the exceptional circumstances attending the creation of the new capital.

These grain allocation texts from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta offer a wealth of detail which is plainly relevant to the state organisation of military and civilian personnel, but difficult for us to disentangle. Much of the uncertainty revolves round the term *pirru*, and the cognate adjective *perru* (or *parru?*), which at present seem to mean approximately “enrolment procedure” and “enrolled”.

108 <i>ša pi-ti</i> LUGAL	108 under the authority of the king,
154 <i>tal-pi-tu</i>	154 written off
<i>ša it-ta-lu-ku-ni</i>	who will be going away,

⁶⁷ II. 25–32: *šum-ma* 1 LÚ *a-li-ku ša hu-[ra]-di i-na pa-ḫi-ti-šu lu URU-¹šu²-nu¹ ù lu-ú ki-i ra-qa-e a-na KUR kat-mu-ḫi e-ru-ub* LUGAL *nap-ša-te ša a-šur* DINGIR-*šu it-ta-ma* [^{1,4b}] *e-er-iš-ma-ni* [(x) x]x-UB-di *uš-šu-ru*.

⁶⁸ For the issues in the next two paragraphs see more detailed discussion in Postgate 2008.

⁶⁹ Jakob 2003, 202–8.

⁷⁰ Postgate 1979a.

1432 <i>re-eh-tu</i>	1,432 the remainder,
<i>ša a-na ši-ip-ri</i>	who will be selected for labour.
<i>i-ba-tu-qu-ú-ni</i>	
ŠU.NIGIN 1694	Total: 1,694
<i>pi-ir-ru</i>	enrolment
<i>ša ŠU¹ub-ri</i>	in the charge of Ubru.

MARV 1.18

The ÉRIN.MEŠ *perrūtu* must be personnel enrolled through this procedure, and presumably the “enrolment officers” (EN.MEŠ *pirri*), of whom there were large numbers (as many as 325 in MARV 2.17:59), were their immediate overseers. What remains obscure at present is whether this whole system of enrolment relates directly to the lists of personnel kept on a number of writing-boards maintained by the central government over a period of some twenty years or longer during the reigns of Shalmaneser and Tukulti-Ninurta. One of these boards (*lē’u*) was the king’s, and there seem to have been four others each named after an individual: Lullayu, Sin-ašared, Šamaš-aḥa-iddina⁷¹ and Adad-šamši. In MARV 1.1 they may have been referred to as “heralds of the boards” (*na-gi-ri ša le-a-ni*), but this is uncertain for grammatical reasons. In MARV 2.17 we learn that when work was carried out at Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta approximately 1,700 troops listed on Adad-šamši’s board were employed.⁷² Of these 404 were “army-troops” ÉRIN.MEŠ *hurādāte*), and 560 were “enrolled” (*perrūtu*), but others come from a range of professions, including 37 exorcists, 17 diviners, 40 scribes of the governor, 22 scribes of the steward, doorkeepers, bird-catchers, transport officials, ... 47 deportees, 28 Šelenayans and 8 Šubrian interpreters. It is evident that not all of these can be performing *ilku* service, and it is hard to suppose that they were all conscripted via an “enrolment” procedure (*pirru*), though some presumably were. Nor do they seem likely all to be “king’s troops”, and in KAJ 245 the “King’s Board” included women, so we are left at present unsure of the mechanism which recruited this varied body of personnel to state service.⁷³

Crafts and Professions

The Middle Assyrian documents bear witness to a wide range of specialised employments. In many cases, such as industrial or agricultural specialists, merchants or scribes, their activities are evident to us and uncontroversial, but there are also a number of professions which have more to do with social organisation and whose function is less obvious. In most cases, the simple professional designation – “shepherd”, “coppersmith”, “doorkeeper” – is insufficient to tell us how the holder of the title is positioned in the social hierarchy or administrative network, and frustratingly the scribes do not specify people’s professions as often as we would like: in legal documents, the witnesses’ professions are given only exceptionally in addition

⁷¹ This Šamaš-aḥa-iddina may well have been the father of Ubru and his brothers (see MARV 1.6), but his role as a “board owner” is probably unrelated to his personal “holdings” of *šiluhlu*.

⁷² And 2262 on the “King’s Board” (see Freydank 1985b, 362).

⁷³ For further details see provisionally Postgate 2008, 84.

to their fathers' names,⁷⁴ and the internal documents of an administrative organisation frequently dispense with both patronymics and professions because the people involved are well known and need no further identification.

When considering the role of different specialised workers within Assyrian society, one of the most difficult issues to resolve is the relationship between them and their employers. Wherever we see a craft worker – or indeed a merchant (*tamkāru*) – serving the palace, the question invariably arises whether he (or she) was exclusively employed by the state or could also pursue his (or her) own independent activities, and the same uncertainty applies to large private households.⁷⁵ It would be otiose to spell out a list of the different crafts and professions, since these have been comprehensively gathered and fully discussed in Jakob (2003). However, for our current purposes two terms merit a brief discussion before engaging with individual archives, as they have a significant role to play in the state organisation. These are the commissioner or representative (*qēpu*), and the eunuch (*ša rēšē(n)*).⁷⁶

The *qēpu* is etymologically a person entrusted with a responsibility, and this effectively meant that he represented the authority who appointed him. In some cases this is the king himself, and we occasionally find men explicitly described as “representatives of the king”, as for instance during a land sale transaction (see §8 of Tablet B of the Laws, and Jakob 2003, 262 for other occasions) although more often they are just given the title *qēpu*. This is plainly not so much a rank or position, but a formally recognised function. In the case of a provincial administrator at Durkatlimmu it is obviously a long-term appointment,⁷⁷ but in other cases it is plainly an ad hoc arrangement for a particular occasion.⁷⁸ Being a *qēpu* did not exclude having a more specific professional designation. Sometimes *qēpūte* can refer to a group of miscellaneous officials (cf. p. 8), while in some cases it was probably a person's specialist skills which made him an appropriate representative. This is visible in the letters of Babu-aḥ-iddina, where we meet groups of his “representatives”: they usually are not given any other title and we remain in the dark as to their special skills, but occasionally someone whose profession we know is mentioned among the “representatives”, and we can see why.⁷⁹ We several times meet “the representatives for Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta” (e.g. MARV 4.106; MARV 4.18:3; 4.57:21; 9.62:6; 9.36:1), or more specifically “of the granary of Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta” (MARV 4.48:4; 4.60:12). Occasionally a scribe is also designated as a “representative” (MARV 4.31:24; 6.86:17 “of Arbail”; 8.21:14), and more than once a son of the king is named as a *qēpu* (MARV 4.34:23; at Durkatlimmu, see Jakob 2003, 269⁵⁶), as are certain well-known, high-ranking

⁷⁴ One such exception is the land sale document BM 123367 (see Figure 3.4, p. 67), where the first witness is a mayor (*hāziānu*) and the second a provincial governor (*bēl pāḥiti*). The remaining witnesses (except as usual the scribe) were not given their professions, and it is likely that these two were specified in this way because their presence as witnesses to an important real estate sale was ex officio, by virtue of the office they filled.

⁷⁵ See for example the work-assignment (*iškāru*) system, p. 221.

⁷⁶ For the scribe, see the next section, and for the “steward” pp. 149–51.

⁷⁷ See pp. 312–3; Jakob 2003, 269ff.

⁷⁸ As for example at Tell al-Rimah in TR 2014 and 3018 (pp. 265–6).

⁷⁹ Specifically, Adad-tura the tailor (*kāšīru*) and Siqi-ilani the merchant (see pp. 214–5).

officials from Tukulti-Ninurta's court, several of whom may at the same time be defined as a "eunuch of the king" (*ša SAG LUGAL qe-pu*).⁸⁰

The Akkadian reading of LÚ.SAG in Neo-Assyrian texts is unquestionably *ša rēši* (as demonstrated by its appearance as a loanword in Aramaic and other languages). Middle Assyrian normally writes *ša/šá SAG*, and its formal equivalent must use the dual form, which is written syllabically *ša re-še-en* in the Laws. In both Middle and Neo-Assyrian times, the meaning eunuch is beyond doubt in some contexts, and I have seen no convincing argument not to extend this meaning to all Assyrian texts, whatever the situation in Babylonia.⁸¹ As in Neo-Assyrian times, it is noticeable that certain Middle Assyrian persons bearing this title use seals which show a beardless adult male (for Ušur-namkur-šarri see Fischer 1999, 122).⁸² In Middle Assyrian texts *ša rēši* (or *ša rēšēn*) are almost always "of the king";⁸³ and as just mentioned, under Tukulti-Ninurta some of the king's eunuchs were on occasion appointed as his representatives (*qēpu*). Ušur-namkur-šarri also held a variety of high offices under Tukulti-Ninurta, and his contemporaries Libur-zanin-Aššur, who dedicated an agate "eye stone" inscribed with his name⁸⁴; Dayyan-bel-ekur and Dayyan-Aššur⁸⁵ were other eunuchs holding high office. Eunuchs are mentioned in the context of palace decrees, where they have dealings with some of the palace women, but guarding the harem was certainly not their only function; Jakob is able to delineate a range of managerial activities undertaken by individuals known to be eunuchs (2003, 66–92).

Land

The most fundamental structure of the Assyrian state consists of the relationship between people and land. The state's essence is to be "the land of Aššur", and the Assyrian coronation

⁸⁰ At least four texts from the Stewards' Archive newly published in MARV 10 conclude with the bare statement "PN (+profession) *qēpu*", evidently recording that this person acted on behalf of the steward in this particular transaction (cf. Postgate 2013a; p. 270).

⁸¹ In this book sceptics may substitute a meaning of their own whenever they see the word eunuch. This is not the place to revisit the arguments in detail especially since the relevant material is fully discussed in Jakob 2003, 84–8, arriving at the correct conclusion (though note that the difficulty he perceives in the phrase *lu-ú ša SAG LUGAL lu-ú ma-zi-iz pa-ni ša la-a mar-ru-ru-ni* is imaginary since the translation should run simply "either a eunuch of the king, or a courtier who is not castrated" – since we know from decree no. 21–2 (cited by him on p. 87) that *mazziz pānī* is a general term for *courtier* which can embrace "eunuchs, or [other] courtiers, or votaries").

⁸² In view of the revised drawing of his seal (Figure 4.12, p. 196) this may not apply to Mutta. See already Postgate 1973b, 10 for persons known to be termed *ša SAG* using seals which show an unbearded adult male.

⁸³ Jakob's invaluable assemblage of references (2003, 82–3) can list only two passages where a *ša rēšē* is not "of the king". Of these, MARV 2.4:7' is broken and very uncertain (the]SAG' is not self-evidently SAG and is followed by the signs *mu-SIG₅*, which look like the second part of a personal name). In Donbaz 1976, A.3199 reads *ša¹ mu-ut-ta ša SAG ša pi-ti* ^{1d}UTU-ri-ba (rather than *-ri-ma<-ni>!*), but it is not clear whether the phrase *ša pitti* PN "in the administrative sphere of PN" refers to Mutta's personal status or to some other aspect of the transaction. Mutta served the palace, and so for the present we cannot certainly identify a single non-royal eunuch although this does not of itself seem an impossibility. Text 105 in the Mutta archive mentions Samu ¹⁰šá SAG (Weidner's reading confirmed by Donbaz 1976, Pl. 8), but even if we should not restore [LUGAL] at the end of the line, in this archive the likelihood is that the man is in royal service.

⁸⁴ Grayson 1987, 299.

⁸⁵ *ša SAG LUGAL qé-e-pi* MARV 1.27:23.

ritual charges the monarch with a duty to “extend your land” (*rappiṣ mātkā*). Part of the same ritual involves the (re)installation of high officials, including “any office holder” (*attamānu bēl pāḥiti*), with the king telling them to resume their office.⁸⁶ The title *bēl pāḥiti* (the Assyrian dialect equivalent of the Babylonian *bēl pīḥati*) literally means no more than someone with a responsibility, but in Assyria during the 13th century it comes to refer specifically to the governor of a territorial province.⁸⁷ In this context it partly or entirely replaces the earlier title *ḥassiḥlu*, best attested in the texts from Šibaniba (Tell Billa).⁸⁸ This has a hybrid origin, with the Hurrian professional ending *-(u)ḥlu* attached to the Akkadian word *ḥalzu*, which is attested in the early second millennium in northern Mesopotamia and Mari as meaning a province and still holds that meaning in Middle Assyrian texts.⁸⁹ The term *bēl pāḥiti* becomes so closely identified with the provincial governor that very soon (at latest by the reign of Shalmaneser) *pāḥutu* on its own came to mean “province” as is evidenced by the two provinces established on the lower Ḥabur, “Upper Province” and “Lower Province”.⁹⁰ As we shall see, the regime of contributions to the Aššur Temple was organised province by province, and they may be summed up as “offerings received of the provinces” (*gi-na-ú maḥ-ru ša pa-ḥa-a-te*.MEŠ MARV 7.22). From correspondence and administrative documents in various archives it is clear that the provincial governor, based at a provincial capital which usually gave its name to the territory he controlled, was the agent through which the central government administered its territory.

In this role the governor represented the king and administered the rights of the monarch over the land within his province. What precisely those rights were, is a much more complex question. In the writer’s view, the crown notionally exercised a sovereign right over all land within the boundaries of the “land of Aššur”, and this was the premise on which the *ilku*, or state service, system was organised. In practice, though, the state, and its legal system headed by the monarch, would have recognised traditional rights to ownership of land, both in the Assyrian heartland round Aššur and in more remote and recently annexed provinces, even if in particular circumstances it also implemented annexations or confiscations of land into the state’s possession. The theoretical issues behind the land-owning situation are too complex

⁸⁶ Müller 1937, 12–14.

⁸⁷ The title features already in the edict of Aššur-uballiṯ (Weidner 1954–6, 268 *Satzung* 1:7). Here it seems likely to mean generally “office holder” rather than “provincial governor” (as rendered in Roth 1995, 197), but the context is too broken for certainty.

⁸⁸ Discussed by Machinist 1982, 22–4 and Llop 2011; since there is no evidence that *ḥalzu* in Middle Assyrian can mean a “fort” (see following note), there is no call for understanding this title to refer to a garrison commander. For the terminology, and a survey of attested provinces, see now Llop 2012.

⁸⁹ There is no evidence in Middle Assyrian sources for a meaning “fortress” which has been imported from the graph ḤAL.ŠU used in Neo-Assyrian texts to render the word *birtu*. The only apparent Middle Assyrian instance of a meaning “fort” relies on an emendation of a royal inscription which is not obviously correct. I have seen no reason to think that the word meant “fortress” or similar at Nuzi either, and there too some if not most scholars accept a meaning like “district”.

⁹⁰ Though in normal parlance, at least, *ḥalzu* also remained in use as a term for province, cf. MARV 4.119:7–12 from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, listing the *ḥal-zi* of Kurda, Addariq, Karana, Apku, Šimu, Ḥašuanu and Šimaniba. The term *pāḥutu* survived into the first millennium and was in due course borrowed into West Semitic languages.

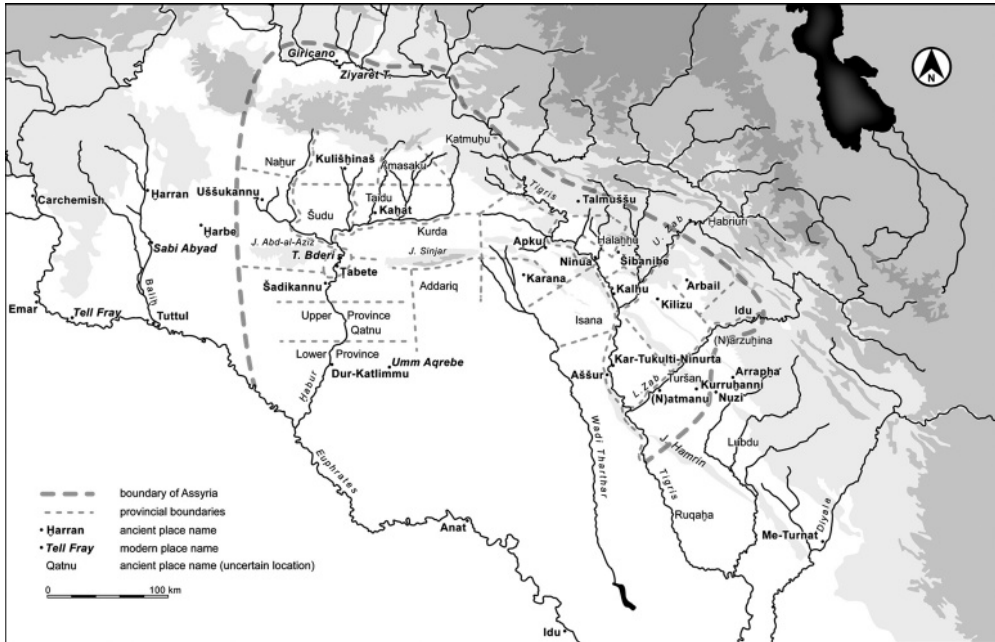


Figure 2.1. Assyria in the 12th century BC showing hypothetical provincial boundaries.

and keenly disputed to address here, and therefore we move on to consider the evidence for various classes of land regime under the Middle Assyrian kings.

Private Land Tenure

While the archives with which we are principally concerned understandably tell us more about state-administered land, this should not blind us to the probability that most agriculture was undertaken by the private sector. At present, the only substantial evidence for private land tenure comes from Aššur. Agricultural conditions around the capital must have differed significantly from the upper Ḫabur and other northern provinces of Assyria. In the first place, Aššur itself is far enough south for rainfall agriculture to be a precarious subsistence strategy.⁹¹ Economically, as the city itself grew it may have outstripped the carrying capacity of the fields in its traditional hinterland: this must have consisted of narrow strips of fertile alluvium along the valley bed of the Tigris, which could be irrigated by simple gravity flow, supplemented by whatever crops could be won in good years from dry-farming enterprises or hand-watered plots in the surrounding countryside.⁹² Undoubtedly in the traditional Assyrian heartland, but also perhaps in more recently annexed territories, there

⁹¹ For the agricultural topography of this part of Iraq, see in detail Oates 1968, 14–15.

⁹² For the terrain around Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta see Freydank 2009a, 59 with footnote 101 citing Eickhoff. Tablet B of the Middle Assyrian laws regulates the collective exploitation of water from wells (§17) and rainfall (§18).

was a long-standing regime of private landownership which we would not expect to generate documentation preserved in the archives of the state administration. There is little documentary evidence for state involvement in agriculture around Aššur (though as we shall see there are important texts from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta across the river), but the Ass. 14446 archive (Pedersén's M9), dating mainly from the 14th century, before the state's annexation of the Ḫabur triangle, gives us a glimpse of the exploitation of rural settlements west of Aššur by the urban elite, shedding light on local land tenure and its role in the economy. Many of these tablets are loans of lead from members of urban families to villagers, backed up by pledges of land.⁹³ They do not follow a rigid formula, but KAJ 14 is typical in several respects.

KAJ 14: Lead Loan with Land Pledge

KIŠIB ʾĪ.GÁL-DINGIR

1 GÚ.UN 5 MA.NA AN.NA

ṭí-ri NA₄ É *a-lim*

KI ¹*i-din-ku-be* DUMU *ri-iš-^dAG*

ʾĪ.GÁL-DINGIR DUMU 30-*na-din-ŠEŠ*.MEŠ

DUMU *la-bu-ni-i[a]*

ŠU.BA.AN.TI *a-na* 6 ITI-*ḫi*

SAG.DU AN.NA ʾĪ.LÁ.E *ki-i ša-pár-ti*

20 IKU A.ŠĀ-*šu* SIG₂-*qú e-be-er-ti*

ši-iš-ša-ar A.GĀR ^{uru}*gu-ub-bi-Ē*.GAL-*lim*

i-na-ás-sa-aq i-ša-bat ¹*i-din-ku-be*

ú-ka-al šum-ma a-na 6 ITI-*ḫi*

AN.NA *la-a i-ḫi-aṭ*

A.ŠĀ-*šu up-pu la-qí*

A.ŠĀ *ú-za-ak-ka i+na a-šal*

LUGAL *i-ma-da-ad*

ú tup-pa MÍ.KALAG.GA

a-na pa-ni LUGAL *i-ša-aṭ-tar*

(witnesses, seal impressions and date)

Seal of Ibašši-ilu.

(seal impression)

1 talent 5 minas of lead

stamped⁷ by the stone of the City House,⁹⁴

from Iddin-Kube, son of Riš-Nabu,

Ibašši-ilu, son of Sin-nadin-aḫḫi,

son of Labuniya,

has received. Within 6 months

he will pay the capital of the lead. As surety

20 *iku* of his prime field(s) across

the Šiššar, commonland⁹⁵ of Gubbi-ekalli,

he will select and take, Iddin-Kube will

hold (it). If within 6 months

he does not pay the lead,

his field is publicly acquired.

He will clear the field of claims, and

will measure it with the royal rope,

and he will write a “valid tablet”

before the king.

Land pledge texts like this one show plots of agricultural land in villages, in danger of passing from their previous owners into the hands of certain Aššur-based families. The villages are described as “across the Šiššar”, a water course plausibly identified with the modern Wadi

⁹³ Transliterations and translations of the archive in Saporetti 1979b; 1982.

⁹⁴ For *ṭiri aban bēt ālim* see Veenhof 1989, 523. Despite his comment about KAJ 47, this phrase is otherwise confined to statements of metal weight or quality; the phrase there must surely be intended to apply to the metal, not the grain, for which other qualifications might be expected, and in any case grain would not be weighed. The MA contexts must imply that the “stone of the City House” is used in some way to approve or authenticate the metal used either in terms of its quality or its actual weight. My translation is a complete guess, but is broadly in line with Veenhof’s proposal to see *ṭiri* as referring “to the fact that the weight had been established by using the official weight standard of the city”. An association with a verb *ṭerú* (*ṭarā’u?*) does not seem implausible, although it is not attested in Assyrian dialect.

⁹⁵ The translation “commonland” for *uḡāru* is intended to emphasise the communal administration of, but not to imply common ownership of, the agricultural territory of a settlement.

Tharthar, some 30 to 40 kilometres west of the Tigris.⁹⁶ One is named after an individual, Ili-itt(i)-ilu; the others are “Cistern of the Palace” (Gubbi-ekalli) and “Well of the water channels” (Bur-raṭati) – all hinting at relatively recent exploitation requiring some form of irrigation, supported by two of the documents relating to Bur-raṭati which mention *shadufs*.⁹⁷ Nissen compared the style of the seals used by different groups on these tablets. Since they were the purchasers, we would not expect the members of urban families to have sealed the tablets, and Nissen demonstrated that the occasional more sophisticated and recognisably Assyrian seals would have belonged to the scribes, who must also have been based at Aššur, whereas the much more frequent and simpler Mittanian-style seals were used by the villagers whose lands were used as security or who acted as witnesses.⁹⁸ As the closing lines of KAJ 14 illustrate, the documents we have are not definitive title deeds (called in Middle Assyrian *tuppu dannutu*), but provisional documents authorising the intending purchaser to possess and exploit his land.

Thus an area of 20 *iku* (~7.2 ha) is to be selected (by the current owner) in KAJ 14, and placed at the disposal of the creditor for the 6-month duration of the loan, but thereafter if repayment is not made the land will be sold. This would involve further legal proceedings to free the land of other claims, and must reflect the fact that in the traditional rural community plots of land were administered in such a way that a family did not have an absolute entitlement to specific pieces of ground, but was assigned the right to cultivate a given area within a larger unit, the precise piece of land being determined by the drawing of lots (*pūru*). Evidence for this practice, which was partly in place to organise and standardise the alternate year fallow regime, is found in occasional Middle Assyrian (and indeed Neo-Assyrian) texts, and is also detectable in the badly damaged Tablet B of the Middle Assyrian law codes.⁹⁹ This shows that land could be delimited by a “great boundary of partners” (*taḫūmu rabi’u ša tappā’i*), within which lay “lots” (*pūru*) divided by “small boundaries”.¹⁰⁰

Middle Assyrian Laws, Tablet B §8 (KAV 2.iv.11–19)

<i>šum-ma LÛ ta-ḫu-ú-ma GAL-a</i>	If a man has interfered with the major
<i>ša-a tap-pa-i-šu ús-sa-am-me-eḫ</i>	boundary of his partners
<i>ub-ta-e-ru-uš</i>	and they have proved it against him
<i>uk-ta-i-nu-uš</i>	and convicted him,
A.ŠĀ <i>am-mar ú-sa-am-me-ḫu-ni</i>	he shall give threefold as much
3.TA.ĀM- <i>a-te i-id-dan</i>	field as he interfered with,
1 <i>ú-ba-an-šu i-na-ak-ki-sú</i>	they shall cut off one of his fingers,
1 ME <i>i-na GIŠ.PA.MEŠ i-maḫ-ḫu-šu-uš</i>	they shall beat him 100 times with the rod,
1 ITI UD.MEŠ- <i>te ši-pár LUGAL e-pa-aš</i>	(and) he shall do 1 month of the king’s work.

⁹⁶ Nissen 1967, 115–16.

⁹⁷ KAJ 151 and 152: *za-ru-gi*. Cf. Wiggermann 2000, 178. §§10 and 17–18 of Tablet B of the Middle Assyrian Laws deal with irrigation matters, and some form of irrigation was probably essential at the latitude of Aššur.

⁹⁸ Nissen 1967, 115–16.

⁹⁹ See Postgate 1989, 144 for the continuation of the practice into the first millennium, and 1982, 309–10 for recent parallels in the Hatay.

¹⁰⁰ §§8–9, as described in Diakonoff 1969, 205 [written in 1949].

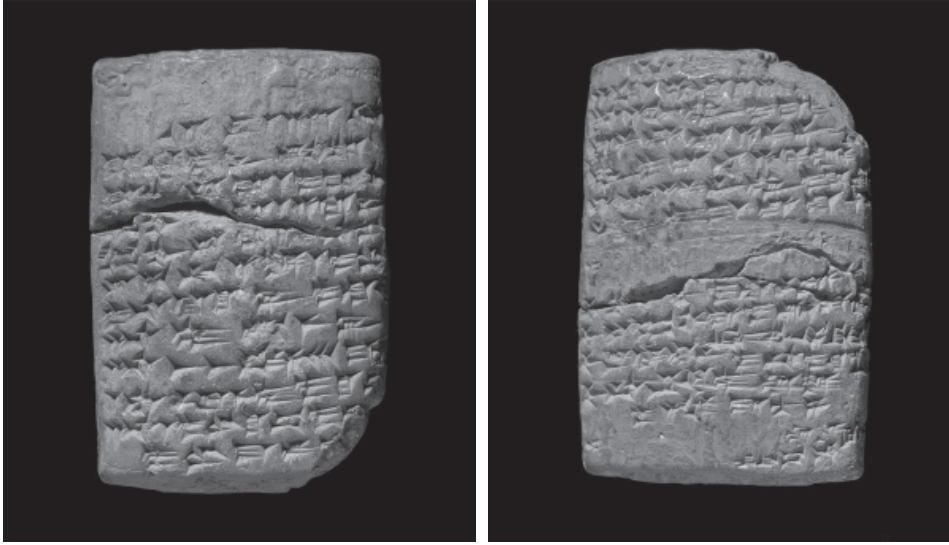


Figure 2.2a. Fourteenth-century land sale document from Aššur (BM 108924). Photo © The Trustees of the British Museum.

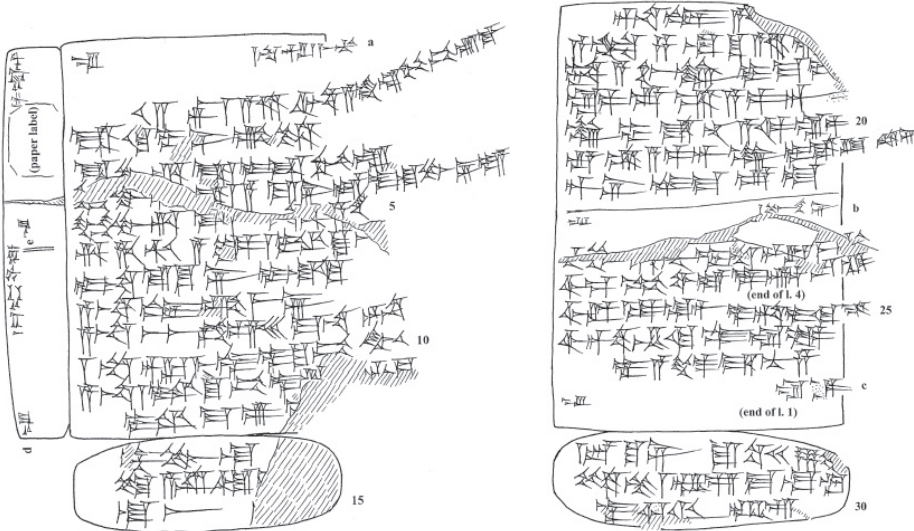


Figure 2.2b. BM 108924, to show positioning of seller's and witnesses' seals and captions (after Postgate & Collon 1999–2001, pp. 12–13). © J. N. Postgate.

a: seller's seal caption, b,d,e: witnesses' seal captions, c: scribe's seal caption.

The major boundaries were important, as indicated by the penalty for removing one. In the following section (§9) lesser penalties are exacted for removal of “the small boundary between lots” (*taḫūmu šaḫru ša pu-ra-a-ni*), a phrase showing that the small boundaries delimited plots allocated by the drawing of lots. This procedure is attested in Middle

Assyrian texts by KAJ 139, which refers to second, third and fourth lots, and by KAV 125–9 mentioning fourth, fifth, seventh and ninth lots. KAJ 139 is from the Ass. 14446 archive, and must belong in the context of a land purchase where a number of existing landowners own lots in two different fields. Two of the owners are “clear” (*za-ku-ú*); a third, Abu-ṭab, plainly is not as the fourth, Ibašši-ilu, “takes recurrent responsibility for clearing” him (*pa-ḥa-at 1a-bu-DÛG.GA za-ak-ku-e [1.Ġ]ÁL-DINGIR-ma it-ta-na-aš-ši*). This illustrates vividly one of the preliminaries to a land purchase in traditional agricultural areas, that is the process of “clearing the field of claims” as required by KAJ 14, and we see that it involved the cooperation of various members of the village community. Putting the 20 *iku* at the disposal of his creditor – who was not a member of the existing village community – obliged the debtor to “select and take” a specific area of land, separating it off from the communally administered plots, and this was of course the first step towards the community’s final loss of control over its traditional lands. The requirement to measure the field and prepare a “valid tablet”, reflecting state control of the land regime, is regularly encountered in the land sale documents of the Ass. 14446 archive and is illustrated by another section of the laws.

Middle Assyrian Laws, Tablet B §6 (KAV 2.iii.2’-49’)

(beginning lost)

a-na KÛ.BABBAR [i-laq-q]qe

ú-di-ni A.ŠÀ ú É

a-na KÛ.BABBAR la-a [i-laq-q]e-ú-ni

1 ITI UD.MEŠ-te’ LÛ¹.[NI]MGIR 3-šu

i-na lib-bi URU ^da-šur ú-sa-ás-sa

3-šu-ma i-na ŠÀ URU A.ŠÀ ú É

ša-a i-laq-qe-ú-ni ú-sa-ás-sa

ma-a A.ŠÀ ú É

ša-a an-na-na DUMU an-na-na

i-na A.GÀR URU an-ni-e

a-na [KÛ.BABBAR] a-la-aq-qe

ša-a la-qa-šu-nu

ú da-[b]a-a-ab-šu-nu

i-ba-ás-ši-ú-ni

tup-pa-te-šu-nu lu-še-li-a-nim-ma

a-na pa-ni qé-pu-ú-te liš-ku-nu

li-id-bu-bu lu-zak-ki-ú-ma

li-il-qé-ú

ša i-na ITI UD.MEŠ-te an-na-a-te

ú-di-i-ni e-da-nu

la-a ma-la’-e tup-pa-te-šu-nu

it-ta-al-lu-né-en-ni

a-na pa-ni qé-pu-ú-te

il-ta-ak-nu-ú-ni

LÛ a-na si-ir A.ŠÀ-šu

i-šal-lim i-laq-qé

i-na UD-mi LÛ.NIMGIR i-na lib-bi

URU ^da-šur i-sa-si-ú-ni

[...] acquires for silver,

before he acquires the fi[eld or] house

for silver,

for 1 month he shall have the herald

proclaim thrice within the city of Aššur,

and proclaim thrice in the village of the

field or house which he is acquiring,

saying “The field or house

of so-and-so son of so-and-so

in the commonland of this village

I am acquiring for [silver].

Let any for whom there is

(a case for) acquiring or litigating

bring up their tablets

and place them before the representatives,

let them litigate, clear (their claims and)

acquire.”

Whoever within this month,

before the completion of the deadline

has brought their tablets (and)

has placed them

before the representatives,

(each) man in proportion to his field

shall acquire in full.

On the day when the herald

proclaims within the city of Aššur,

1 *i-na* SUKKAL *ša pa-ni* LUGAL
 DUB.SAR URU LÚ.NIMGIR
 ù *qé-pu-tu* *ša* LUGAL *iz-za-zu*
ša-a URU A.ŠĀ ù Ē
i-laq-qe-ú-ni
ḥa-zi-a-nu 3 GAL.MEŠ *ša* URU *iz-za-zu*
 LÚ.NIMGIR-*ma ú-sa-su-ú*
tup-pa-te-šu-nu i-šaṭ-ṭu-ru
i-id-du-nu
ma-a i-na 1 ITI UD.MEŠ-*te an-na-te*
 3-*šu* LÚ.NIMGIR *is-si-si*
ša i-na 1 ITI UD.MEŠ-*te an-na-te*
tup-pu-šu la-a it-tab-la-an-ni
a-na pa-ni qé-pu-ú-te
la-a il-ták-nu-ú-ni
i-na A.ŠĀ ù Ē *qa-su e-li*
a-na mu-sa-as-si-a-ni
ša-a LÚ.NIMGIR *za-a-ku*
 3 *tup-pa-a-te* *ša sa-su* LÚ.NIMGIR
ša LÚ.DI.KUD.MEŠ *i-ša-ṭu-ú-ru*

one of the chancellors serving the king,
 the city scribe, the herald and
 the king's representatives shall be present.
 The person who is acquiring the village,
 the field or the house, the mayor (and)
 three elders of the village shall be present,
 shall have the herald proclaim,
 shall write their tablets (and)
 hand them over,
 saying "Within this month
 the herald has proclaimed thrice.
 Whoever within this month
 has not brought his tablet,
 (and) has not placed (it)
 before the representatives,
 shall forfeit his field or house.
 It is clear (of claims) for the person
 who had the herald proclaim."
 They shall write three tablets of the herald's
 proclamations for(?) the judges ... (remainder fragmentary)¹⁰¹

There are numerous points of interest in this law. One is the expectation that the real estate being acquired will be in a village away from Aššur itself, which entails the involvement of both officials in the capital and local authorities. There is little evidence from outside Aššur illustrating the land tenure conditions in the provinces, but the Urad-Šerua family's land holdings in Šarika, along with other documents from their archive (Chapter 4.5), provide evidence from the 13th century for the urban elite's interest in rural property, and there is evidence from Tell al-Rimah in the jezirah to the west supporting the picture of a countryside linked in various ways to the city. Also from Tell al-Rimah comes a rare land sale document from outside Aššur, which prescribes that the purchaser "shall encircle the field (to measure it), and according to the edict of the king he shall have the herald make an announcement".¹⁰² The verb *ušalba* "encircle" here replaces "measuring with the royal rope" and is a usage otherwise known to us from Nuzi rather than Aššur (CAD L 76), suggesting traditions which may have persisted from Mittanian times, but the rest of the phrase requires adherence to the procedures decreed by the king.

Another point of interest in Tablet B §6 is the whole process of "clearing" the property of other claims and the importance attached both to the presentation of written evidence for any claims and to the completion of further documentation to finalise the transfer of ownership.¹⁰³ A chest full of "tablets of the herald's proclamations" for houses in the city

¹⁰¹ The broken passage may have said where the three copies went; for some thoughts on this see Villard 1996. Note that Roth's translation (1995, 178) "Three tablets that the judges will write ..." would require the Assyrian subjunctive form *išaṭṭurūni*.

¹⁰² TR 3004:12'-14' A.ŠĀ *ú-šal-ba ki-i pi-i ri-ik-si* *ša* LUGAL LÚ.NIMGIR *ú-sa-sa* (Wiseman 1968, Pl. LVIII, collated).

¹⁰³ For more detail of the various legal procedures prescribed by this law and the land conveyance tablets, see Postgate 1971, 515.

of Aššur is listed in the inventory of Urad-Šerua's storeroom (see p. 242), and immediately after that a chest of "clearance(s) of people and fields of the town of Šarika (*tazkīte ša ÉRIN.MEŠ u A.ŠĀ.MEŠ ša uruŠarika*)", which again underlines the role of formal legal documents in the procedures required for the purchase of property whether at Aššur or in the countryside. As at Tell al-Rimah, the requirement in KAJ 14 and similar documents to measure the land "with the king's rope" and to write the final property deed "before the king" emphasises the state's direct concern to control the regime of landownership across its territory. This may in part reflect the king's role as the principal judicial authority (in which role he retained the title *uklu* "overseer" specifically in relation to land entitlement until the end of the Assyrian Empire in the 7th century), but it must also link to the system of state service (*ilku*), which was probably formally attached to any private landholding in the land of Aššur, and is occasionally mentioned in the context of land tenure.¹⁰⁴

State Farms

Even if private landownership (albeit conditional on *ilku* obligations) may have been the norm, the state did manage its own estates, as the texts from Durkatlimmu demonstrate. They clearly show that a provincial government could administer a number of farms for which the chief farmers were allocated fields amounting to multiples of 100 *iku* (ca. 36 hectares) primarily for barley cultivation, although they were also expected to produce sesame and wheat, and at Durkatlimmu at least there were separate, smaller plots established on irrigated land.¹⁰⁵ Looking at the evidence for the yields recovered, compared with the different demands on the provincial administration's stocks of grain, the scale of the operation at Durkatlimmu may seem surprisingly small, but texts from Aššur using an extremely similar formulation suggest that this may not have been exceptional. The areas and yields recorded for Nemađ-Ištar, in the jezirah between Nineveh and the Ḫabur, with a total of state-cultivated land of 600 *iku* (~216 ha.) were in the same order of magnitude, as were the comparable texts dealing with Turšan and Ḫiššutu.¹⁰⁶ It is clear that from at least the reign of Shalmaneser the central government installed an agricultural regime administered by the provincial authorities in different regions of the state for the production of grain and other crops. Much of the harvest each year went back into seed corn and rations for the plough oxen and farm labourers, but in good years there was a surplus to fill the provincial palace's granaries. Nevertheless the amounts involved are by no means huge, and it is plain that this was not in any way a complete state takeover of the local economy.

¹⁰⁴ See pp. 21–7; Postgate 1971; 1982.

¹⁰⁵ In this context we should compare the first-millennium allocations of land to high state officials (e.g. the chief cupbearer, the Palace Herald and certain provinces) in one of the Harran census tablets (SAA 11 No. 219 = Fales 1973, No. 21; see Postgate 1989, 146–7).

¹⁰⁶ See Freydank 1994a and pp. 323–4 for all these texts.

Prebendary Allocations of Land

This is not the whole picture. From Tell Chuera there is clear evidence for two other ways the state promoted agriculture. On one hand there are small (2–3 *iku* ~0.72–1.08 ha.) plots of land assigned to individual members of the local governing cadre of Assyrian officials, numbering about 30 in all. Plots this size, as pointed out by Jakob, cannot have been sufficient to sustain an official and his family throughout the year, so this was presumably only one part of a package of remuneration. The situation must partly have depended on whether the majority of the governing cadre consisted of local residents, with a pre-existing subsistence base they could fall back on, or were rather state employees posted to a remote part of the kingdom, who would have needed more substantial state support. At Chuera they are referred to as “Assyrians”, presumably to distinguish them from the locals, and this suggests that we should see them as more of a colonial garrison, planted on a partially deserted landscape to act as a secure staging point on the route to the west, rather than a surviving pre-Assyrian population which maintained its presence.

In either case, there must have been cultivable land available to the state authorities which could be allocated to its dependants, and the Chuera archive also includes a number of texts demonstrating the establishment of farms staffed by “Elamites” with their entire families. We know of no obvious occasion on which the 13th-century Assyrian kings might have captured large numbers of ethnic Elamites. As noted by Jakob, while many of the people in these lists do have distinctly non-Assyrian and in some cases clearly Elamite names, others have good Assyrian names, and this suggests that the population in question had already spent some time within the cultural ambit of the Assyrian state. The term *našhūtu* “deportees” is not applied to them in the texts we have, so they should not be viewed as recent deportees, but perhaps as willing “agricultural colonists” taking part in a state programme of rural expansion. The texts we have are concerned with rations issued to them, so that they are economically dependent on the state, but included with the rations is an allocation for seed corn, at a level suggesting that each family may have been allocated a plot of 2 *iku* (~0.72 ha.) to cultivate (Jakob 2009, 98). Particularly tantalising is text No. 73 from Chuera, which does, as Jakob proposes, strongly suggest that similar arrangements may have been made for incoming “Assyrian” families (since children are mentioned), and that we may be right to see this as a deliberate state policy of encouraging agricultural colonisation within the private sector.

What is very evident is that the administration of land at Chuera was strongly determined both by the local environment and by the transient political circumstances, and should not be viewed as some kind of generalised organic process. Politically, the site of Tell Chuera may not have been a significant settlement under the Mittanian regime, but it certainly fell within Mittanian territory and the Assyrians must have represented a foreign power when they first took over the district. Environmentally, the prospects of a sequence of adequate annual rain-fed harvests must have been better than at Durkatlimmu, more than 100 kilometres further to the south and so receiving less annual rainfall, but there was probably less opportunity to cultivate a large area of irrigated land since Chuera is a long way from a major watercourse.

At Aššur the Urad-Šerua Archive contains a few texts which look as though they list plots of state land allocated to state employees (pp. 255–6).¹⁰⁷ While it is not clear how these tablets relate to the family's private archive, the mention of Urad-Šerua himself in No. 74 does suggest that they are not completely out of context. Each is different: No. 71 has difficulties of interpretation, but lists plots, ranging from 10 down to 2 *iku*, each associated with an individual; filiations are unfortunately not given, but some of these are names borne by highly placed members of the administration, and all bear good Assyrian names, which is compatible with their being members of the urban elite from Aššur. The plots are in a town or village whose name is damaged, but the following line appears to mention Nineveh. There is then the name of Aššur-našir, mayor (*haziānu*), and a line which seems most likely to read “of the writing-board of (*ša le-[‘i]*)” Mudammeq-Marduk. The tablet is impressed with a seal bearing Mudammeq-Marduk's name and giving his title as “Governor of the Land”; he and Aššur-našir the mayor again are similarly mentioned at the end of text No. 72, which lists houses assigned to some of the same individuals (and coincidentally is dated to his own eponymate).

The plot sizes in No. 71 are on average larger than those issued to the cadre of Assyrian staff at Tell Chuera (see p. 38),¹⁰⁸ and it seems that some of the recipients also received a house. If it is correct that they are some or all members of the Aššur establishment, it is unlikely that they would propose to reside permanently in this new house in a rural settlement, and we should probably regard these allocations as a form of prebendary remuneration which enabled them to maintain an economically dependent, if not socially inferior, family there and so to benefit as landlords from their cultivation of the agricultural plot.¹⁰⁹

Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta

Text No. 74 of the Urad-Šerua Archive is rather different; its obverse seems to mention issues of palace seed grain for the cultivation of areas of land, and on the reverse are listed a number of very highly placed individuals, including Libur-zanin-Aššur, royal eunuch, Aššur-belilani, a royal representative (*qēpu*), and Urad-Šerua himself. It is unfortunate that so much of this tablet is lost that we cannot confidently reconstruct its content, but recently published texts from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta provide a dossier of evidence for the allocation of prebendary plots to state officials, including Libur-zanin-Aššur and others high in Tukulti-Ninurta's hierarchy (Freydank 2009a). One of the principal events of his reign was the creation of a new capital city, named after himself, on the left bank of the Tigris not far upstream from Aššur. This was called Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta (The Port of Tukulti-Ninurta), and the site

¹⁰⁷ Postgate 1988a, pp. 174–87 with general discussion on pp. 182–4; these texts are similarly understood by Jakob 2009, 16¹⁵³, although the Šamaš-aḫa-iddina inheritance he refers to does not refer to land as such, only to *šiluhlu*-dependants.

¹⁰⁸ For the size of family plots see Wiggermann 2000, 181, 5 to 20 *iku*, citing Freydank 1980.

¹⁰⁹ Such a family might well be designated “villagers”, for which the Assyrian would be *ālāyu* (as attested in KAJ 7), and would differ from the *šiluhlu*.



Figure 2.3. Aerial view of Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, 1973. © Georg Gerster/Panos.

(Tulul el-Aqr) was excavated by the Aššur expedition in 1913.¹¹⁰ One of his inscriptions, on a stone slab from the vicinity of the new ziqqurat, describes the initiative as follows:

Grayson, RIMA 1, 273–4 (A.O.78.23:88–109)

*i-na UD-mi-šu-ma e-ber-ti
 URU-ia URU ba-it DINGIR.MEŠ ^daš-šur
 EN ma-ḥa-za i-ri-šá-ni-ma e-peš
 at-ma-ni-šu iq-ba-a a-na si-qir
^daš-šur DINGIR ra-i-mi-ia mu-ḥur-ti
 URU-ia ^daš-šur i-ta-at ÍD.^dIDIGNA
 i-na na-me-e A.GÀR.MEŠ ar-bu-ti
 a-šar É ù šub-tu la ba-šú-ú
 ti-lu ù e-pe-ru la šap-ku-ma
 SIG₄.MEŠ la na-da-at URU ^daš-šur
 i-na e-ber-ta-a-an lu e-púš
 URU kar-¹GIŠ.KU-ti-^dnin-urta MU-šu
 ab-bi áš-ri be-ru-ti ki-ma qe-e*

At that time the god Aššur, my lord, requested of me a cult-centre, across from my city, the desire of the gods, (and) commanded me to construct his shrine.

On the instruction of Aššur, the god who loves me, facing my city Aššur, along the Tigris, in a wasteland of deserted commonlands, where there was no house or dwelling, and no mounds or earth had been piled up, (and) no bricks had been laid, a city of Aššur I constructed on the opposite bank. Its name I called Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta. I sliced through wild places along (the

¹¹⁰ See Eickhoff 1985 for the 1913 work, and for the resumption of work in the 1980s Dittmann 1990. The substantial recent Iraqi work at the site is described in Mühl & Sulaiman 2011. For the provenance of the tablets, see pp. 82–3.

lu-se-lit pu-šūq ḥur-šá-ni še-ru-ti
i-na NA₄ pa-li-ši lu-še-ti-iq
mi-tí-ir-ta mu-kín-na-at ZI-ti
ma-a-ti a-bi-la-at nu-uḥ-ši
uš-pél-ka-am-ma qar-bat URU-ia
a-na tam-ki-ri lu aš-kun i-na ḥi-ši-ib
 A.MEŠ *pa-at-ti šu-a-ti gi-na-a*
a-na ⁴aš-šur ù DINGIR.MEŠ GAL.MEŠ EN.MEŠ-ia
da-riš lu ar-ku-ús

mason's) string (and) cut through the steep slopes
 of high hills with stone borers,
 I opened up a canal sustaining the life of
 the land and bringing plenty, (and) I put the meadows
 of my city under irrigation.
 From the produce of the water
 from that channel I dedicated regular offerings
 to Aššur and the great gods my lords
 in perpetuity.

Here then the state was taking control of an area of previously uncultivated land, presumably on the terraces above the alluvial river flats, where an irrigation project from the Tigris or Lower Zab some distance upstream was needed. Tablets from the excavations allow us to glimpse the process of allocating the land in action. Some of it was designated the property of the palace and entrusted by the royal representatives (*qēpūte*) to officials for cultivation: an example of this is MARV 4.106, where the responsible person, Innamer, is simply called “the supervisor of the fields” (*ša UGU A.ŠĀ*). The tablet is sealed by Innamer, and is effectively a work and delivery contract, supplying him with seed corn and fodder for the plough oxen (but no rations for workers, unlike the Durkatlimmu texts), and requiring him to deliver the harvest.

MARV 4.106 Contract for Cultivation of State Land¹¹¹

KIŠIB <i>in-na-me-er</i> (seal impression) ¹¹² 27 ANŠE ŠE.NUMUN 4 ANŠE 1BÁN ŠUKU GU ₄ .MEŠ <i>i+na GIŠ.BÁN ša ḥi-bur-ni</i> <i>ša É.GAL-lim</i> <i>ša É kar-me</i> <i>ša ŠU qe-pu-te</i> <i>ša ^{mu}kar-¹IGI.DUB-MAŠ</i> <i>i+na UGU ¹in-na-me-er</i> <i>ša UGU A.ŠĀ</i> <i>a-na 90 A.ŠĀ</i> <i>a-na me-re-še</i> <i>š[a ?] [x x x] -ta?</i> <i>a-na a-ra-še</i> <i>ta-ad-na-áš-šu</i> <i>te-li-it BURU₁₄</i> <i>i-ma-da-ad</i> <i>ù tup-pu-šu</i> <i>i-ḥap-pi</i> ITI <i>qar-ra-a-tu UD.21.KÁM</i> <i>li-mu ¹a-bat-tu</i>	Seal of Innamer 27 homers, (for) seed corn 4.1 homers, (for) the rations of the oxen in the <i>ḥiburnu sūtu</i> , belonging to the palace, of the granary, in the charge of the representatives of Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, (are) incumbent on Innamer, the field supervisor. For 90 (<i>iku</i>) of field for the cultivated land of [(a place name)] to cultivate it it is issued to him. The harvest yield he will measure out, and (then) his tablet <u>he may break.</u> Month of Qarratu, 21st day, eponymate of Abattu.
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¹¹¹ Edited in Freydank 2009a, 23.

¹¹² See MARV 4, p. 158 No. 21; Fischer 1999, 142 Nr. 18.

The eponym Abattu (presumably the first of that name) belongs at least 10 years into Tukulti-Ninurta's reign (Röllig no. 33¹¹³). MARV 9.62 (Freydank 2009a, 24) is a very similar bilateral contract drawn up on the same day between the Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta representatives and Maršanu, who is only identified by his father's name.

Here then we see the state retaining possession of the newly created fields and their produce, directly controlling the agricultural activity and employing its own officials in a contractual mode. A different mode is reflected in MARV 9.18. The lines summing up the content of this tablet run as follows:

PAB-*ma* 1010 IKU *me-ru-šu ša* ^{uru}*kar*-¹GIŠ.KU-ti-MAŠ
i-na lib-be 110 ANŠE EN.MEŠ ŠUKU.MEŠ
 44 ANŠE *a-na gi-na-e* 1 ANŠE 6BÁN *ša x[]x-ši-i*
 10 ANŠE ¹*me-li-ḫu-um-ba* 4² ANŠE 4BÁN 6 ŠILA NINDA³.MEŠ
 7 ANŠE 8BÁN ŠUKU ANŠE.KUR.RA.MEŠ
 1 ANŠE 4BÁN 6 ŠILA MUNU⁵.MEŠ-*te*
te-li-it BURU₁₄ *ša li-me* ¹SU-^dAMAR.UTU

“Total: 1,010 *iku* cultivated land of Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta. Therefrom:

- 110 homers – prebend-holders
- 44 homers for the fixed offerings
- 1.6 homers
- 10 homers – Meliḫumba
- 4.46 homers bread²
- 7.8 homers – rations for the horses
- 1.46 homers – malt³

Harvest yield of the eponymate of Erib-Marduk.”

MARV 9.18: Rs. 22'–27' (Freydank 2009a, 53)

The first line of the tablet gave the column headings for three sets of figures: “Fields of dike² and farmstead³” (A.ŠÀ *ša E ù du-ni*), “Their grain yield” (ŠE-*um te-li-su-nu*) and “Fields they are not [cultivating]” (A.ŠÀ *la i-r[u-šu]*). While these categories are not entirely clear, the text does explicitly identify some of the produce as going to the fixed offerings, as Tukulti-Ninurta's inscription would lead us to expect, but also uses the term prebend-holders (EN.MEŠ ŠUKU.MEŠ), which provides confirmation that the practice of assigning plots of land to state officials, deduced from the texts from Aššur and elsewhere, can accurately be described in this way. The total of 110 homers assigned to prebend-holders is more than half the total yield. If each of them managed their own plots, it is unclear why the state should list their individual amounts, so possibly the entire area of 1,010 *iku* was farmed as a single operation and shares of the harvest were allocated to the prebend-holders and other recipients in proportion to their nominal landholdings.

This tablet, dated to Eriba-Marduk, comes from near the end of Tukulti-Ninurta's reign, but allocations of prebend land were certainly made earlier in the reign.¹¹⁴ The most detailed

¹¹³ For Röllig's list of eponyms see Appendix 2, with comment p. 53.

¹¹⁴ On the date of Eriba-Marduk cf. Freydank 2009a, 60¹⁰³.

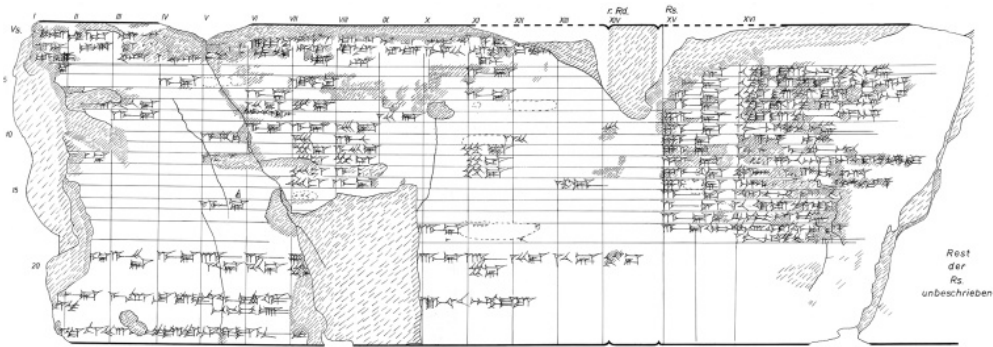


Figure 2.4. Land register from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta (Freydank, MARV 4.173). © H. Freydank.

evidence for this is provided by the remarkable tablet VAT 21325 (MARV 4.173), dated some years earlier (Salmanu-šumu-ušur, Röllig 42, not before Tukulti-Ninurta's 18th year). It is, unusually, wider than it is high, and ruled into 16 columns which continue round the right-hand edge of the tablet and onto the reverse, contrary to the usual disposition of text on a cuneiform tablet.¹¹⁵ The reason for this unusual format is that the scribe needed to record the landholdings, arranged horizontally in Cols. i–xiv according to their location, assigned to some 15 individuals or groups, listed vertically in Col. xvi.3–18. The landholders include a number of high officials known from other texts, including Ušur-namkur-šarri, perhaps at this date the governor of Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, and Aššur-tapputi. They are listed as individuals, but five of the entries are for the “decury” (10-*tu* = *ešartu*) of an individual, again including Ušur-namkur-šarri, but also the other well-attested eunuch of Tukulti-Ninurta's reign, Libur-zanin-Aššur, and Mušabši-Aššur, known as a son of the king and a *qēpu*.¹¹⁶ The landholding in xvi.17 is attributed to “the king”, and that in xvi.18 once again to Ušur-namkur-šarri. The headings for Col. i–xiv specify the location of the fields: these include at least four villages (ii, vii–ix),¹¹⁷ the “commonland” (A.GĀR) of Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta (xi) and of “the village of Ili-ayabaš” (i), a marsh area (*appāru*; ii) and a lake (“small sea”, vi). Col. xii mentions an orchard, and in Col. x probably “the cultivated area of Ušur-namkur-šarri”.

The documentation from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, which includes further texts attesting to the prebend regime, discussed at length in Freydank (2009a), reflects a similar situation to Tell Chuera, in the sense that we are looking at land brought into cultivation by the state's initiative, partly managed directly as a state enterprise and partly assigned to servants of the state in remuneration for their service. The Assyrian occupation, one may almost say colonisation, of the western territories referred to as Hanigalbat goes well back into the reign

¹¹⁵ See Freydank 2009a, 25 on this, and 24–37 on the text as a whole.

¹¹⁶ For the “decury” (division of ten men) see p. 287 (& Jakob 2003, 29²⁰² on MARV 4.127 and MARV 4.173).

¹¹⁷ The village in Col. vii is URU ša DINGIR-KI-ia “of Ili-ittiya”. The men of this village (URU ša DINGIR-ti-ie-e) are listed under an officer as “marked men” on the writing-board of Adad-šamši in MARV 1.5:16 (same *limmu* year as MARV 4.173), but it does not seem to me certain, or even probable that it is the same village as encountered in the Ass. 14446 archive as “of Ili-itti-ilu”, pace Freydank 2009a, 32 and Nashef 1982, 22. As Freydank observes, this would extend the geographical scope across the Tigris to the Wadi Tharthar well to the west.

of Shalmaneser, and by the time Tukulti-Ninurta came to the throne there were decades of experience of establishing and administering state-controlled cereal production and allocating plots of land to provide for the subsistence of employees of the state (cf. Freydank 2009a, 58). It may have been exceptional, in that land so close to the capital would surely have been exploited earlier if it had not required irrigation, and was therefore dependent on the royal project to secure the labour for constructing an entirely new canal. The fragmentary evidence discussed earlier from the Urad-Šerua Archive for prebend land assigned to high state officials in the Nineveh region seems to show that the state disposed of land in the provinces for this purpose, but it is hard to be sure whether this was because it had no suitable land nearer to the capital, or because the higher rainfall on land further north made it preferable.

Tell Sabi Abyad

The most detailed picture of an Assyrian agricultural enterprise will surely come from the much larger archive from Tell Sabi Abyad. While the majority of the texts from here are still to be published, very significant work has already been done by Wiggermann in reconstructing the conditions revealed by the archive.¹¹⁸ Today the mound of Sabi Abyad sits in the valley of the Baliḫ river, east of the main stream, some 45 kilometres south of Ḫarran and west of Tell Chuera. A Neolithic settlement had left a tell on which a small fortified farmstead was erected in the Mittanian period. With the arrival of Assyrian rule, probably under Shalmaneser I, a new fortified building occupying 60 by 60 metres (perhaps not coincidentally one *iku*) was constructed on the site of the Mittanian fort, and from within the walls of this enclosure the Dutch expedition recovered an archive of about 315 tablets (Wiggermann 2000, 175⁶). The settlement was a *dunnu* “fortified farmstead”, and for much of its existence it was the property of the Chief Chancellor (*sukkallu rabiu*), Ili-pada, who was a member of the parallel royal dynasty sometimes given the title “King of Ḫanigalbat”, and contemporary with the later years of Tukulti-Ninurta I.¹¹⁹ The majority of the tablets derive from the archives of the stewards (AGRIG) who controlled the activities of the *dunnu*: for most of the period covered this was Tammitte, but before him Mannu-ki-Adad also served his time as the steward.¹²⁰ The final publication of the complete archive will doubtless shed much light on the role of the stewards in the *dunnu*. It appears to have been organised very much along the same lines as state establishments in the provinces such as Ḫarbu and Durkatlimmu. Tammitte managed as many as ten flock-masters (*nāqīdu*), and was authorised to exact a penalty of 100 strokes on them if they missed the annual count,¹²¹ while his predecessor Mannu-ki-Adad’s duties included issuing sickles to the workforce:

Sabi Abyad T96–3 (Wiggermann 2000, 207)

20 <i>ni-gál-lu</i> ZABAR	20 sickles of bronze
ša <i>ʿma-nu-ki-i</i> -10	belonging to Mannu-ki-Adad,

¹¹⁸ Primarily Wiggermann 2000.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 172; Cancik-Kirschbaum 1999b; on his seal, Wiggermann 2006.

¹²⁰ Wiggermann 2000, 172.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 200.

LÚ.AGR[IG]	the steward,
¹ <i>i-ga-ar-še-i-mi-id</i>	Igaršemid
<i>a-na e-ša-di</i>	has received for harvesting.
<i>ma-ḫi-ir</i>	
A.ŠĀ <i>i-ši-id</i>	He shall harvest the field,
[<i>n</i>] <i>i-gál-li</i>	give (back) the sickles,
<i>i-dan</i>	
<i>ù tup-pu-šu</i>	and (may then) break
<i>i-ḫap-pi</i>	<u>his tablet.</u>
ITI <i>ša sa-ra-ti</i>	Month Ša-sarrati
UD.13.KĀM <i>li-mu</i>	13th day, eponymate of
¹ <i>a-bat-tu</i>	Abattu (33).

Igaršemid is known from other texts as a “chief farmer” (*rab ekkārāte*), a position the Durkatlimmu texts clearly show to be a farm manager. The archive covers other aspects of the agricultural regime (including animal husbandry), and Wiggermann has estimated that the area of land falling under the steward’s administration equated rather neatly to the area of low-lying irrigable land in the vicinity of the mound. He reckons therefore that virtually all the *dunnus* would have been irrigated (like a small proportion of the state fields at Durkatlimmu); the yield may support this, the great majority of the irrigated area was presumably given over to grain, and much good-quality wheat was recovered from the site, but a small area would have been assigned to sesame and garden plants. The grain enterprise was entrusted to a staff of chief farmers, as at Durkatlimmu, and from the number of sickles issued to them Wiggermann has concluded (188) that they would each have been responsible for a farm of 200 *iku*, very much in line with similar evidence from Aššur. The labour force on the fields at Sabi Abyad appears to have been rather evenly divided between free families of farmers and the dependent workers called *šiluḫlu*, both totalling about 400 persons. This provides the best evidence we have at present for the social condition of the *šiluḫlu* class.

Summary

To sum up, there was a long-standing tradition of private ownership of real estate at Aššur, which is illustrated by the provisional conveyance arrangements built into loan transactions between urban families and indigent villagers in the 14th century: these indicate that village communities tightly administered land property rights within their territory, but were unable to prevent individual members of the community from selling their property rights outside the village, which may have forced a suspension of the traditional system of annual allocation of plots by lot. The eventual final sale of such landholdings had to be publicly announced in Aššur and in the village in question, the land had to be surveyed and the king had, nominally at least, to be involved in the transaction. At one provincial centre, Tell al-Rimah, land sale also had to be announced by herald in accordance with royal decree.

It is reasonable to assume that across previously settled territories the Assyrian state found an established land tenure regime which saw most land as property of the local population, in practice if not in theory, and that on the whole such rights would have been respected.

This would not have prevented urban elites from using their economic power to acquire land and although hard evidence for this is scattered and scanty, it appears likely that there was a widespread tenant-farmer relationship resulting from the pledging of both land and persons as security for debts, expressed in some instances by the term villager (*ālāyu*). Another example of the urban elite acquiring land in the provinces is supplied by two texts from the Archive of Babu-aḥa-iddina, but the details of the legal formalities are lacking (texts 31 and 36 see Table 4.11 p. 206).

While there is no clear evidence for the confiscation of land by the state, we do have plenty of evidence for the existence of state-owned (or at least, state-controlled) agricultural land, especially around Durkatlimmu and Ḥarbu (Tell Chuera) in the mid-13th century and later in the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta around his new capital of Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta. The areas are not vast, and it seems at least possible that in all cases we are looking at previously unused tracts which the state has brought into cultivation in pursuit of a deliberate policy of agricultural expansion, such as is described in explicit terms by Tiglath-pileser I and by later Assyrian kings in their inscriptions. Such plots, if directly farmed by the state, provided grain for the state's granaries in its provincial capitals which was also at the disposal of the central government, and was used to feed the state's dependent workers and other rationed employees. Other plots could be allocated as prebend land to state office holders: the actual cultivation would probably be carried out by tenant or otherwise dependent families, whether villagers or *šiluhlu*. The state could also draw on provincial granaries to provide rations for deported populations, who would in due course be settled on state land, very likely as *šiluhlu*, while at Ḥarbu in particular there is evidence that free families were also installed on land with state help.

Before moving on, two points should be stressed: that what we can say about the Assyrian land regime is of course entirely dependent on the tablets and the scribes who wrote them, and that the occasion for writing a text is almost always a shift in the status quo. Tukulti-Ninurta's account of his Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta project is celebrating a major initiative, but legal or administrative tablets are concerned with change to the existing order: pledges and sales, reflecting economic trends within society, or initiatives to bring fresh land into cultivation in response either to the availability of a fresh workforce or to the creation of newly cultivable spaces resulting from irrigation projects. And all these records depend on the scribes, whether they worked for the royal palace or a provincial governor, or were employed by private households.