

DAVID AARON



"Standard Inscription" Of Ashurnasirpal II

Mesopotamia

9th - 8th Century B.C.

Gypsum

H: 6.3 x W: 10.3 cm

Located on the eastern bank of the Tigris River, Nineveh was one of the most important cities in antiquity, the capital and largest city of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, as well as the largest city in the world for several decades, and the centre of worship for the deity Ishtar. The Southwest Palace of Nineveh, where this fragment is thought to originate, was first laid out by Sennacherib (r. 705-681 BC). It was a showcase of wealth and art, comprising 80 rooms and decorated with sculptural reliefs. It became standard practice for Assyrian kings to record their military campaigns with large-scale sculptural reliefs, filling their palaces with evidence of their prowess, as well as with courtly hunting scenes and divine protective imagery. Many cuneiform tablets have been found there, and this fragment most likely comes from a larger relief with a large script. Ashurnasirpal II (r. 884-859 BC) was the third king of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, and was one of the most ambitious, ruthless and magnificent of all the Assyrian kings. His many successful military campaigns brought him great wealth, and he set about renovating the earlier palaces of his empire, including that of Sennacherib at Nineveh. He founded a new capital city at Nimrud and there he created the Standard Inscription. The Standard Inscription is not an object, but rather a single, standardised cuneiform text written in Akkadian, which was carved out many times in celebration of Ashurnasirpal's accomplishments. Taken from a larger gypsum wall carving, the present fragment consists of 5 partial lines from the inscription, thought to read 'With the help of Assur my Lord ... to all the people'. The complete inscription ran to 22 lines of script altogether. The first five lines assert the king's credentials: "Palace of Assurnasirpal, vice-regent of Aššur, chosen one of the gods Enlil and Ninurta, beloved of the gods Anu and Dagan, destructive weapon of the great gods, strong king, king of the universe, king of Assyria, son of Tukulti-Ninurta, great king, strong king, king of the universe, king of Assyria, son of Adad-nerari, great king, strong king, king of the universe, king of Assyria; valiant man who acts with the support of Aššur, his lord, and has no rival among the princes of the four quarters, marvellous shepherd, fearless in battle, unopposable mighty floodtide, king who subdues those insubordinate to him, he who rules all peoples, strong male who treads upon the necks of his foes, trampler of all enemies, he who smashes the forces of the rebellious, king who acts with the support of the great gods, his lords, and has conquered all lands, gained dominion over all the highlands and received their tribute, capturer of hostages, he who is victorious over all countries..." The next nine lines report the extent of his victories, stretching from Mount Lebanon in the west to Armenia in the east, and encroaching south into Babylonian territory. The last eight lines tell how he rebuilt the city

of Kalhu (and made it his capital), and settled it with people from his newly conquered territories. He built a great palace, decorated with the finest woods and metals, and stone statues of the beasts of the mountains and the seas; then he filled it with treasure. Half of the known extant carvings of the Standard Inscription are from Nimrud, but other, mostly smaller fragments such as the present one, have been found at Ashurnasirpal's other building projects, including the Southwest Palace of Nineveh.

Literature:

David Aaron Ltd, 2022, No. 16.