

Babylonische Archive Band 1

# MINING THE ARCHIVES

FESTSCHRIFT FOR CHRISTOPHER WALKER  
ON THE OCCASION OF HIS 60TH BIRTHDAY

edited by Cornelia Wunsch

ISLET

Dresden 2002

# Babylonische Archive

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Herausgeber  
Cornelia Wunsch

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## A Note on the *Akītu*-House at Harrān\*

Jamie R. Novotny — Toronto

For Christopher  
ūmē arkūte tūb ūri u būd libbi sīn  
nikkal u nusku ana kāša lišruku\*\*

Not only did Assurbanipal (668–631) assume responsibility for completing building projects that were still unfinished at the death of his father Esarhaddon (680–669), but he also initiated a number of building enterprises himself. Assyria's last great monarch built in no less than fifteen cities, but it was only Babylon, Harrān, and Nineveh that received extra special attention. The second of these, a large garrison and important trading centre situated on the route between the Mediterranean Sea and the plains of the middle Tigris, appears to have had especial political, military, and religious significance during the Sargonid period (721–612).<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Harrān's principal temples Eħulħul ("House Which Gives Joy"), Egipar ("Giparu-House"), Emelamana ("House of the Radiance of Heaven"), and Sīn's *akītu*-house received a great deal of attention since they were all rebuilt by Assurbanipal.<sup>2</sup> The importance of building at Harrān is attested by the fact that reports of, or at least references to, building and decorating these temples appear in no less than

\* A.K. Grayson, G. Frame, and R.F.G. Sweet kindly served as readers for this manuscript and made valuable comments. In addition, J.C. Jones proofed the final edition of this paper and offered helpful suggestions. Their time and care is greatly appreciated. Moreover, I am grateful to J.E. Curtis and C.B.F. Walker, the honouree of this Festschrift, for permitting me to collate Assurbanipal inscriptions in the British Museum. Further thanks are due to the Trustees of the British Museum for the kind permission to publish the partial copies of K 2664+. My appreciation goes out once again to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the University of Toronto for providing the funding necessary to support the Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia Project, whose archives were an invaluable resource in the preparation of this article. This study was prepared in conjunction with a wider Ph.D. study on building activities at Harrān during the reign of Assurbanipal.

\*\* Based on the greeting formulae of Mār-Ištar, Esarhaddon's agent in Babylonia; see for example, SAA 10, 304 no. 369: 4–6.

1 For example, this prestige is illustrated not only by the facts that Sargon II reinstated the *kidin-nu* of Harrān, that Sīn regularly occurred as a theophoric element in names of members of the royal family, and that Aššur-etel-šamē-erisetim-muballissu was appointed by his father Esarhaddon as *šešgallu*-priest of Sīn-of-Harrān, but also by the fact that Assurbanipal claims to have completely rebuilt the entire Eħulħul complex bigger and better than before. For Harrān in the Neo-Assyrian period, see Postgate, RIA 4, 122–125; Menzel, *Assyrische Tempel* 1, 88–89; and Pongratz-Leisten, *Fs Boehmer*, 549–550 and nn. 3–4, 6. In addition, Harrān's importance is presently being studied by K. Åkerman, *The City of Harrān in the Neo-Assyrian Period*.

2 For these temples, see Ebeling, RIA 2, 279, 304, and 360; and George, *House Most High*, 93, 99, and 123 nos. 380, 470, and 764.

twenty-three inscriptions, including eight annal and summary inscription editions from Nineveh and Kalḫu,<sup>3</sup> and tablet copies of two summary inscriptions and eight display texts intended for Ḥarrān.<sup>4</sup> However, despite the number of texts in which Assurbanipal boasts about building in this city, there are only four different reports, not including those found in the various display inscriptions, commemorating construction at Ḥarrān:

1. the Large Egyptian Tablet (= LET) report;<sup>5</sup>
2. the canonical first summary report (Prisms I [= Borger's TVar],<sup>6</sup> C, CND [= CKalach], G, and T, as well as K 3065 and Rm 589);
3. the commemorative report (K 2664+ = Edition L); and
4. the second summary report (Inscription from the Ištar Temple = IIT).

Until recently, the rebuilding of the *akītu*-house at Ḥarrān was known only from the last of these four reports. A further, closer examination of K 2664+, however, reveals that this tablet contains a building report which commemorates the completion of this festival-temple, and not Eḥulḥul as previously thought. Thus, our study will focus on the presenting the evidence for this new interpretation.

Like other important Assyrian cities such as Arba’il, Assur, Kalḫu, Kilizi, Kurba’il, and Nineveh, Ḥarrān also had an *akītu*-house.<sup>7</sup> Although the earliest extant reference to this

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3 IIT (= Inscription from the Ištar Temple) and Prisms I, C, G, and T originate from Nineveh, whereas Prism CND (= CKalach) comes from Nimrud. For brief studies of these editions, see Gerardi, *Assurbanipal's Elamite Campaigns*, 61–65, 70, and 75; and BIWA 122–137 and 258–264 (Fuchs).

4 For the summary inscriptions, see n. 5 and the discussion of K 2664+ below. The relatively short display texts intended for Eḥulḥul, Egipar, Emelamana, and the *akītu*-house are: K 2803 + K 3256, K 2813 + K 8394 + K 18744 + 79–7–8,134, K 2822 + DT 133 (+) K 2826 + K 8931 + K 8597, K 8759 + Rm 133 + Rm 288, K 9143, Sm 530 + Rm 2, 235 (+) Sm 1977, Sm 671, and 89–4–26,209. All of these tablets come from the libraries of Assurbanipal at Nineveh, and are either archival copies or *Vorlage*-texts. For details on these archives and libraries, see Pedersén, *Archives*, 160–163 and plans 75–76; Parpola, CRRA 30, 223–236; and Reade, CRRA 30, 213–222. The other inscriptions mentioning building at Ḥarrān are: Prisms B/D, K 7596, 81–1–27,280, and possibly Rm 2, 320.

5 The LET report = rev. 43–69. The LET are large, broad, single-column tablets. At present, five exemplars have been assigned to this inscription: K 228 + K 3081 + K 3084 (+) K 4535 (Onasch, ÄAT 27/1 pls. 2–3 [figs. 5–6] and 7–8 [fig. 10]), K 2675 (*ibid.* pls. 4–5 [figs. 7–8] and 9–10 [fig. 13]), K 4451 (IWA pls. 39–40), K 5564 (BIWA LoBl 30), and K 6368 (Onasch, ÄAT 27/1 pl. 1 [figs. 2–3]). The *terminus post quem* for these so-called annals tablets, despite the occurrence of *rēš šarrūti* (“accession year”) in the building inscription, is 664 since the death of Taharka is the latest chronologically dated event recorded in this inscription; see Gerardi, *Assurbanipal's Elamite Campaigns*, 54–55; and Tadmor, in ARINH 22–24 and n. 37.

6 After a careful examination of the fragments designated by Borger as T Variant (= TVar; BIWA 134–136), it is clear that this group of texts is a definable edition, not a sub-edition or variant of another prism class, including Prism T. Since the classification of BM 134462 etc. as TVar is misleading and inaccurate, it is recommended that Borger's designation be discontinued. Prism I is suggested as a suitable replacement.

7 Pongratz-Leisten, *Ina Šulmi īrub*, 79–84; in *Assyria* 1995, 245–252; and RIA 9 3/4, 296 §3. Pongratz-Leisten suggests that the *akītu*-festival in Assyria was often closely associated with a paramount military role, which in the case of Ḥarrān may have symbolized the constant presence and control of the Assyrian king in the northwestern region of the empire. This festival, however, will not be discussed here since these topics will be addressed in a more detailed study of the cults at Ḥarrān.

structure and its associated festival dates to the reign of Sargon II (721–705),<sup>8</sup> both the temple and its celebratory procession probably existed long before the Sargonid period despite the complete lack of textual and archaeological evidence. Although Harrān and its cult of the moon-god Sīn have a long history, with the former dating back to the mid-third millennium and the latter at least to the reign of Zimrī-Līm (1774–1762), very little is known about temple building in this city. Construction on the *akītu*-house is, at present, only referred to in two inscriptions of Assurbanipal.

Although this temple is mentioned by Assurbanipal in Egipar display text 89–4–26,209<sup>9</sup> and Ḫa<sup>l</sup>-ki<sup>ti</sup> d30 ša URU.KASKAL appears in the subscript of Sm 671 (rev. 5'),<sup>10</sup> nothing of importance can be learned from these two inscriptions, apart from Harrān having a festival-temple; this information is also known from two Neo-Assyrian letters (K 1234 and 81–7–27,30).<sup>11</sup> However, a vague boast about completely rebuilding this structure is known from the second summary report of Assurbanipal's activities at Harrān found in the prologue of the IIT.<sup>12</sup> The relevant passage reads:

IIT: 64b) Ḫ a-ki\*-tu\* mu-š[ab(?)] be-lu-ti-šú(?) a]r-ṣip ú-šak-lil KÙ.BABBAR KÙ.[GI ú-šal-biš ...]

I completely (re)built the *akītu*-house, [his lordly] resi[dence, (and) adorned (its walls)] with silver (and) go[ld ...].

With regard to appurtenances of gold and silver, it is not clear which room or rooms of the temple were adorned since we have no information about its layout. Undoubtedly, the text inscribed on Sm 671 would have provided some pertinent information about the interior decoration of this temple, but the relevant passages are no longer preserved.

8 SAA 1, 149 no. 188: 7–rev. 7. Nabū-pāšir, an individual who appears to have been the governor of Harrān at this time, reports on a successful *akītu*-festival to Sargon: “On the seventeenth of [Aiiāru(?)], the god Sīn ex[ited] (his temple) and [en]tered (his) *akītu*-house. The *nīqu*-offerings (offered) on behalf of the king, my lord, were performed successfully. The god Sīn retur[ned], entered his temple, peacefully sat upon his seat, and blessed the king, my lord.”

9 Craig, ABRT 2 pls. 1–2; and Meek, JAOS 38 (1918) 168–169. The relevant passage (lines 23–24) reads: *a-na i-tab-bul DINGIR-ti-šá GAL-tú šá a-se-<sup>l</sup>e Ḫ a-ki-<sup>ti</sup> e-peš x[x x x] / a-na da-rat MU.AN.NA.MEŠ la-bar u<sub>4</sub>-me SUD.MEŠ a-na DINGIR-ti-šá <sup>u<sup>2</sup>?</sup>-[kin]*, “for her divinity, I ma[de (these *gīstallū*) endure] for many years to come, far into the distant future, to carry (the statue) of her great divinity every time it goes out to the *akītu*-house, to perform [...].”

10 Sm 671 (IWA pl. 49) is the upper right portion of a broad, single-column tablet containing a display inscription commemorating the fashioning of some decorative object/architectural feature for the *akītu*-house. The extant text contains part of the dedication to Sīn (1–16), the list of Assurbanipal's titles and epithets (17–24), advice to a future prince (rev. 1'–2') with applicable maledictions (rev. 3'–4'), and part of the subscript (rev. 5').

11 For K 1234 (= SAA 1, 149 no. 188), see n. 8. 81–7–27,30 = SAA 10, 274 no. 338: 9–rev. 2. The lamentation-priest Urad-Ea describes the procedures of the *akītu*-festival to Esarhaddon (ca. 670–II–10): “On the seventeenth day, the god Sīn sets off (and) takes up residence in the *akītu*-house. Let the king, my lord, give the order to hand over the *kuzippu*-garments; I [will bring (them) with] me. [The] *eršabungū*-psalm will be [per]formed ov[er (them)], he (the god Sīn) will bl[ess] the king, [my lord], and provide the king, [my] lord, with a very long [life].” Although it is not entirely certain, K 1024 (= SAA 10, 277 no. 343), another letter from this lamentation-priest of Sīn, may also report on this same *akītu*-festival at Harrān (after 670–II–22).

12 The second summary report = IIT: 60–69a (Fuchs, in BIWA 273–274).

Until recently, this fragmentarily preserved passage in the IIT was the only reference to Assurbanipal completely rebuilding Sîn's *akītu*-house. However, closer examination of K 2664+ reveals that the building report of this fragmentarily preserved tablet also commemorates this event. But before we examine this passage, let us introduce our source.

K 2664 + K 3090 + K 4544A + K 5903 + K 6632 + K 8371 + DT 177 is the lower part of a fragmentarily preserved three-column tablet (14×16×2.3 cm) containing either an archival copy or *Vorlage*-text of a summary inscription which commemorates Assurbanipal's fifth Elamite campaign, several of his wars against the Arabs, and the rebuilding of the *akītu*-house at Harrān.<sup>13</sup> Although the tablet is not dated, the approximate date of composition (ca. 645–643) can be deduced from the historical references appearing in the text. The prologue (i 1'–iii 1'), which promotes the king's image as a temple builder, is similar to that of Prism T, but with at least one major omission, the canonical first summary report of Assurbanipal's building activities at Harrān.<sup>14</sup> The account of the second campaign against Ummaladasu of Elam (iii 2'–iv [36]) and the concluding formulae (v 21–vi 9) are virtually identical to Prism T (with minor variants),<sup>15</sup> but the episodes concerning the wars against the Arabs ([iv 37(?)]–v 13)<sup>16</sup> and the report commemorating the completion of Sîn's *akītu*-house (v 14–20) are unique to this edition.

Now that K 2664+ (Edition L) has been properly introduced, we can focus on the main building report. Assurbanipal proudly boasts:

v 14–20) *ina u₄-me-[šú-ma<sup>1</sup>] [É a-ki-i]t<sup>(?)</sup> d30 / [ša qé-reb<sup>1</sup>] URU.KASKAL / [ša il<sup>1</sup>-li-ku] [la<sup>1</sup>-[b]a-riš] / tem-me-en-šá [a]d-di / ul-tu UŠ<sub>8</sub>-šá a-di GABA.[DIB-b]é-šá / ar-šip ú-[šak]-[lil] / [ú]-šal-bi-šá za-ha-lu-<sup>1</sup>u<sup>1</sup> [eb-bu]*

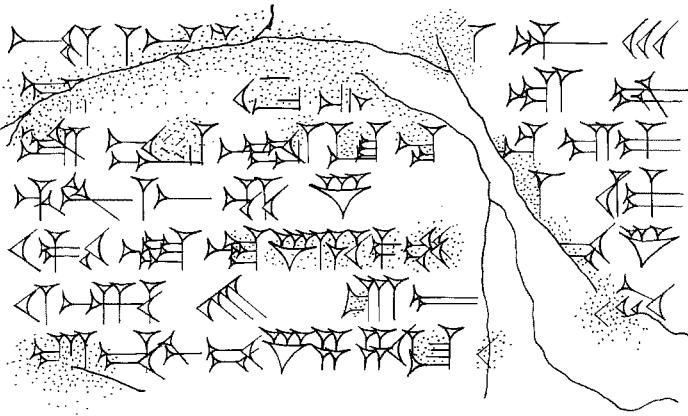
At that time, (with regard to) [the *akītu*-*u*-*[house of]* the god Sîn, which is (situated) inside the city Harrān (and) which had become old, [I] (re)laid its foundations, com[ple]tely (re)built (it) from its foundations to its crenellatio[n]s, (and) decorated (it) with [shiny] *zahalū*-metal.

13 Streck, VAB 7, XXXVIII–XXXIX and 218–221 no. 16; Bauer, IWA pls. 26–27 and 53, 34–35 and 54; and Borger, BIWA 168–169 and 8° Heft 494–501. Borger (BIWA 137) designated K 2664+ as TTaf 1, but a closer examination reveals that this inscription is a distinct edition, not a duplicate, sub-edition, or variant of Prism T. Therefore it is recommended that Borger's designation be discontinued. Edition L is suggested as a suitable replacement.

14 The canonical first summary report = C i 71–98, T ii 29–iii 14, K 3065 i, and Rm 589 ii (BIWA 141–143). If it is assumed that no passages were omitted from the prologue of Prism T between ii 13 and iii 33, then there would be a lacuna of seventy-one lines between i 37' and ii 1'. However, note that there are not more than twenty-nine lines missing at the beginning of col. i and that there is a gap of not more than forty lines between ii 15' and iii 1'. Based on these two lacunae, it is conjectured that Edition L omitted at least one major passage from the prologue of Prism T. The thirty-eight line canonical first summary report is the most logical choice since the beginning of column ii would have continued the narrative of work undertaken on Šarrat-Kidmuri's behalf begun at the end of col. i (i 30'–37') and since the very end of the report commemorating the completion of the Sîn-Šamaš temple at Nineveh is found in ii 1'–3'. Therefore, this lacuna is estimated at about thirty-three lines.

15 Compare T iv 36–v 32 and vi 17–51 (BIWA 57–58, 167–168, and 170–172).

16 With regard to the Arab campaigns, v 1–5 describe the punishment of Uaite' and v 6–13 report on the capture, deportation, and flaying of Abī-Iate' and Aia-ammu, the sons of Te'ri; compare Prism A ix 107–111 and x 4–5 (BIWA 68–69).



For the most part, this passage is very straightforward, except for the first line. The gap between *ūmēsuma* and *sîn* has traditionally been restored as *é-bûl-bûl* É, but, as we will argue presently, this proposal is incorrect since the temple whose restoration is being commemorated is actually the *akîtu*-house. Evidence for this is fivefold:

1. Bauer tentatively proposed that the beginning of v 14 could be restored as “[*É-bul-bul, der Tempel*],” and Borger restored this same passage as [é-búl-búl É ?]DIŠ.<sup>17</sup> This logical interpretation is presumably based on *ša qereb ḥarrāna* in the following line. Bauer’s and Borger’s proposals were initially rejected as there is insufficient space to restore both *é-búl-búl* and *É*; the gap in question is 1.5 cm. Based on measurements of these same signs in other tablets intended for Ḥarrān, the minimum space required for this proposed restoration is 2.4 cm. The space required for the restoration *É a-ki-it*, however, is far less; this proposal is further validated by the fact that [É a<sup>1</sup>-ki-ti in Sm 671 rev. 5’ is exactly 1.5 cm. The tight fit in v 14 could accommodate *bīt akīt* only if *akītu* is written with A, as it is in Sm 671 and 89–4–26,209: 23, and not with A.
2. Further evidence *contra é-búl-búl É* is that ceremonial temple names do not appear to have been mentioned in the opening line of main building reports of Assurbanipal’s Assyrian inscriptions. Evidence stems from Prisms I and CND. In the former, the Sīn-Šamaš temple at Nineveh is referred to as *bīt sīn nikkal šamaš u aia*, “the temple of the gods Sīn, Nikkal, Šamaš, and Aia;” and in the latter, Ezida at Kalḫu is simply called *bīt nabū*, “the temple of the god Nabū.”<sup>18</sup> This phenomenon occurs also in Assurbanipal subscripts beginning with *musarū ša*, “inscription of.”<sup>19</sup>

17 IWA 35, and BIWA 169 respectively.

18 I2 (A 8112) i' 9 (= T iii 18) and CND x 88 (BIWA 144 and 164) respectively. This is in contrast to the building reports of his Babylonian inscriptions, where the ceremonial temple name is specifically mentioned; the everyday name is often used in apposition to the proper name. For example, see BIWA 85 the Nergal-Las-Inschrift: 78.

19 For example, IWA pl. 33 K 3079 iv 1'-2', where Emeslam is called *bit nergal ša kuti* "the temple of the god Nergal-of-Cutha."

3. The style of the building report gives the impression that it commemorates the completion of a structure smaller and less significant than Ḥarrān's principal temple as many of the essential elements describing its rebuilding known from the LET and canonical first summary reports are absent: Sîn permitting his temple to become old and dilapidated, the divine commission, the reference to Shalmaneser III (858–824) as a previous builder, the enlargement of the temple complex, the providing of cedar beams for roofing, the hanging of monumental door leaves in its principal gateways, the reference to Sîn's *atmanu*, the setting up of *rîmû* and *lakmû*, and the reinstallation of Sîn's statue upon its dais. Furthermore, if Edition L commemorated the rebuilding of Eḥulḥul, why did its editor simply not copy or repeat information in the existing summary reports known to him, or only slightly modify it? The obvious solution is that this passage reports on the construction of another temple, one smaller and less significant.
4. In v 17–18, the feminine pronominal suffix (-ša) affixed to *temmēn-*, *išdē-*, and *gabadibbē-* is a further indication that this building report commemorates the rebuilding of the *akītu*-house. In the canonical first summary report and in the second summary report, where Assurbanipal claims to have rebuilt Sîn's principal temple from top to bottom, the masculine pronominal suffix (-šu) is used;<sup>20</sup> in addition, all suffixes referring to Eḥulḥul in the LET, canonical first summary, and second summary reports are masculine.<sup>21</sup> Elsewhere in the Assurbanipal corpus, where this Assyrian king boasts about rebuilding Mullissu's *akītu*-house at Nineveh, -ša is employed when a pronominal suffix is used.<sup>22</sup>
5. The date of K 2664+'s composition (ca. 645–643) is approximately twenty years too late to commemorate the completion of Eḥulḥul in its main building report since that temple was completed ca. 663 or earlier. Since it is well known that Ḥarrān's principal temple was completed early in Assurbanipal's reign and since the rebuilding of this festival-temple is only otherwise attested in the prologue of the IIT, an inscription composed ca. 639, it is very plausible that the date of this tablet's composition corresponds more or less with the conjectured date for the completion the rebuilding of this *akītu*-house.

The evidence presented above suggests that the building report of Edition L commemorates the rebuilding of the *akītu*-house. Therefore, there is little reason to doubt that this tablet contains a copy of an inscription which was inscribed upon prisms or cylinders deposited in the structure of this temple. If this proves true, then the subscript (vi 10–11)

20 C i 84, T ii 47, and Rm 589 ii 5; and IIT: 61 (BIWA 143 and 273).

21 LET rev. 45–47, 50, 56–57, 66–68 (Onasch, AAT 27/1, 112–113); C i 76, 82, 83, 87–88, 90, T ii 34, 44, 46, 51, iii 1, 4, K 3065 i 6, 14–15, and Rm 589 ii 4; and IIT: 61–62 (BIWA 142–143 and 273–274).

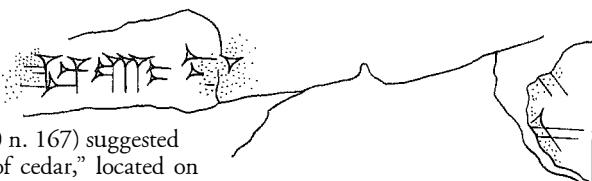
22 T v 43 (*mīqit[ta]ša adke*), 45 (*attaddi temmēnša*), and 48–49 (*ana sibirtiša aršip ušaklil*; BIWA 169–167). Compare also several inscriptions of Sennacherib commemorating Aššur's *akītu*-house at Assur; see Luckenbill, OIP 2, 142 no. c (I3): 4–5; and Frahm, AfO Beih. 26, 176 T 144.

should be read as: [MU.SA]R-ú š[*a* É *a-ki-it* 43]0! / [ša *qé-reb* URU.KA]SKAL!, “[inscrip]tion o[f the *akītu*-house of the god Sîn, [which is (situated) inside the city Ḫarrān.”<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, if v 14 and vi 10 are restored correctly, then K 2664+ reveals that Sîn’s *akītu*-house was situated inside Ḫarrān, rather than on the outskirts the city as previously thought.<sup>24</sup>

Lastly, with regard to the date of this project, if we accept the boast of *aršip ušaklil*, “I completely (re)built (it),” as fact, then the approximate date for its completion is ca. 645–643. It is less certain when construction began, but it could have been as early as 647, that is, after the composition of the canonical first summary report. Since we know from a study of Assyrian editing techniques of the prologues of Prisms I, C, CND, G, and T that the general trend was to omit or to add complete episodes and not to alter them, except for very minor changes, it is highly unlikely that an alternative report of this king’s activities in this city would have entered circulation while the canonical first summary report was still in use (648–645[?]). Despite the fact that Assurbanipal could have initiated construction on the *akītu*-house very soon after the issuing of Prism I, it was not until an entirely new prologue promoting the king’s image as a temple builder was composed that he could boast about rebuilding this structure (ca. 639). Since the building report of K 2664+ gives the impression that the *akītu*-house was a relatively small structure, it probably did not take more than a couple of years to complete. If so, then construction may have begun as early as 647 and as late as 645, 644 at the very latest.

An examination of K 2664+ from the original provides new information not only about Assurbanipal’s building activities at Ḫarrān, but also about the location of Sîn’s *akītu*-house. Although this seven-line passage provides very few details about the physical structure of temple, it is, at present, the most comprehensive report of this phase of building. Apart from Assurbanipal completely rebuilding its superstructure, the only things that we know about this temple are that it was lavishly decorated with appurtenances of gold, silver, and *zahalû*-metal, and that it was situated inside the city. The completion of this temple (ca. 645–643), at least according to extant contemporary sources, marks the end of known Assyrian building activities at Ḫarrān, which was captured and looted by a Babylonian-Median coalition in 610.

23 Compare Borger’s (BIWA 172) reading of vi 10: [MU.S]AR-ú š[*a* ...].x.



24 Lewy (HUCA 19 [1945–46], 440 n. 167) suggested that the *bīt-ili ša erēni*, “temple of cedar,” located on the outskirts (*ina qanni*) of this city in K 2701A: 11 (= SAA 10, 136–137 no. 174) — a letter from Marduk-šumu-uṣur addressed to Assurbanipal and which reports on a staged coronation ceremony that took place near Ḫarrān in early 671 (Nisannu or Aīāru) — was Sîn’s *akītu*-house, principally since he was under the impression that all temples of this type were situated outside the city walls. Compare Mullissu’s *akītu*-house at Nineveh which was also inside the city; Reade (RIA 9, 419 §15.1) suggests that this temple was situated in the outer town and not in the citadel (Kuyunjik) since Assurbanipal states that it was *qereb Ninūa*, rather than *ina qabāl āli* (T v 34; BIWA 169).

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