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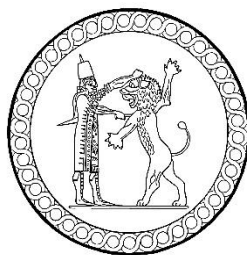
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**“ASHURBANIPAL, THE KING WHO IS RESPLENDENT LIKE A BRIGHT LIGHT”:
GYGES’ DREAM IN ASHURBANIPAL’S E PRISMS REVISITED***

Tonio Mitto — Jamie Novotny

Few inscriptions from Ashurbanipal’s first decade as king of Assyria have been positively identified. Many of the texts that we do have from this period of time are very fragmentarily preserved, which has led to a lack of scholarly consensus about the contents and dating of these royally-commissioned compositions. The so-called “E Prisms” have generated a lot of scholarly discussion since 1977, when Mordechai Cogan and Hayim Tadmor carefully examined the report(s) about the Lydian king Gyges voluntarily sending an audience gift to Ashurbanipal sometime after the latter officially became king of Assyria in 668 BC.¹ In that seminal study, Cogan and Tadmor concluded that there were

* This article stemmed out of Mitto’s PhD dissertation on the “Seed of Kingship”, a bilingual historical-literary composition commemorating Nebuchadnezzar I’s deeds (Frame 1995, 23–31 B.2.4.8–9), in particular, the hitherto-unpublished dream account included in it. Mitto’s research is part of the Humboldt-funded Electronic Babylonian Literature (eBL) Project led by Enrique Jiménez and based at LMU Munich. Mitto was principally responsible for the sections “Gyges’ dream in a new light” and “Appendix: Score edition of the Gyges narrative”, while Novotny generally worked on “Sources for the Gyges narrative in Ashurbanipal’s E prisms” and “The three E prisms: E-a, E-b, and E-c”. The authors would like to express their gratitude to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München (Historisches Seminar — Alte Geschichte) for providing support for our research on Assyrian (and Babylonian) texts. We would like to thank Susanne Paulus and Kiersten Neumann of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago and Ivor Kerslake of the British Museum for providing us with hi-res digital photographs of Ashurbanipal prism fragments A 8130, BM 121018, and BM 127940+. Moreover, we would like to express our gratitude to Grant Frame, Joshua Jeffers, and Enrique Jiménez for reading through and commenting on a draft of this manuscript. Their time and care are greatly appreciated. Any errors or omissions are solely the responsibility of the authors.

The modern designations used in this article are the traditional scholarly designations for Ashurbanipal’s inscriptions. The line numbers cited follow Novotny & Jeffers 2018 and Jeffers & Novotny 2022. Note that the page numbers for Jeffers & Novotny 2022 are not cited. The chronological sequence of the texts is based on Novotny 2003, 214f., which is a revised version of the arrangement of texts presented in Grayson 1980, 245.

1. Cogan & Tadmor 1977, 65–87. Gūgu (or Guggu) of Luḫdu is known as Gyges (Γύγης) in classical sources. The precise date of the first contact between Gyges and Ashurbanipal is not known. A. Kirk Grayson (1980, 230, 232) tentatively suggested that the Lydian king sent his envoy to Nineveh — which caused a bit of a stir in the Assyrian court because no one there could understand a word he was saying — ca. 666–665. An earlier date, ca. 668–667, is also possible; see Aro-Valjus 1999, 428. For further information on Gyges, with some bibliographical references, see Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 18 (with nn. 112–114).

two inscriptions that had been previously treated by scholars as one and the same text. “Prism E”, which had been first identified by G. Smith in 1871,² was reclassified as “Prism E₁” and “Prism E₂” since the two editions of Ashurbanipal’s “annals” had (1) distinct versions of how Gyges came into direct contact with his Assyrian counterpart and (2) different buildings reports. Prism E₁ — whose account of construction recorded work on the replacement House of Succession (the North Palace)³ and which Cogan and Tadmor regarded as having the longer of the two Gyges accounts — was believed to be the earlier of the two texts and was thought to have been composed ca. 666–665 BC. Prism E₂ — whose building report described repairs made to Nineveh’s citadel wall and which Cogan and Tadmor considered as having an abbreviated version of the Gyges report — was regarded as the later of the two E Prisms and was theorized to have been written ca. 665–664 BC.⁴ These 1977 proposals are still generally accepted today and are maintained in the most recent editions of these two inscriptions by Jamie Novotny and Joshua Jeffers in volume 5/1 of the *Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Periods* (RINAP) series.⁵ However, a closer look at the extant E Prism material, the Gyges narrative(s) in particular, reveals that the current understanding of the E Prisms needs to be significantly revised since both the Prism E₁ and Prism E₂ inscriptions very likely contain one and the same description of Gyges’ extraordinary first contact with Ashurbanipal. This new interpretation makes it clear (1) that there were (at least) three E Prism inscriptions and (2) that the Prism E₂ inscription was composed earlier than the Prism E₁ text, and not the other way around as scholars have assumed for over the last forty years. This paper will re-evaluate Ashurbanipal’s E Prisms in light of a previously unrecognized parallel in the earliest accounts of the Gyges narrative.

1. Sources for the Gyges narrative in Ashurbanipal’s E prisms

Reports recording that Gyges of Lydia sent an envoy to the Assyrian administrative capital Nineveh are well attested in the extant corpus of inscriptions of Ashurbanipal.⁶ These accounts appear in no less than eight inscriptions written on multi-faceted clay prisms, one text inscribed on (unsculptured) wall slabs, and four inscriptions preserved on clay tablets.⁷ The first reports appear to have been written (shortly) after Gyges sent his messenger to Nineveh with a voluntary payment, an event that has been proposed as having

2. Smith 1871, 78.

3. For information on the North Palace, see, for example, Barnett 1976; Kertai 2015; Reade 2000, 416–418 §14.4 and 7; and Jeffers & Novotny 2022, Introduction *sub* Nineveh.

4. For some details on the citadel wall, see Reade 2000, 397–399 §11.1–2; and Jeffers & Novotny 2022, Introduction *sub* Nineveh.

5. Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 37–42 Ashurbanipal 1 (Prisms E₁), 42–51 Ashurbanipal 2 (Prism E₂).

6. For a full list of references, see Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 16 (*sub* Lydia 1 and Lydia 2); and Jeffers & Novotny 2022, Introduction Table 1 (*sub* Lydia 1 and Lydia 2). See also fn. 7, below.

7. Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 37–42 Ashurbanipal 1 (Prism E₁), 42–51 Ashurbanipal 2 (Prism E₂), 51–80 Ashurbanipal 3 (Prism B), 80–100 Ashurbanipal 4 (Prism D), 107–136 Ashurbanipal 6 (Prism C), 137–165 Ashurbanipal 7 (Prism Kh), 279–209 Ashurbanipal 9 (Prism F), 222–264 Ashurbanipal 11 (Prism A), and 296–311 Ashurbanipal 23 (IIT); and Jeffers & Novotny 2022, Ashurbanipal 74 (K 4438A+), Ashurbanipal 92 (K 2697+), Ashurbanipal 125 (82-3-23, 85), and Ashurbanipal 207 (LET).

taken place in or before 666 or 665 BC,⁸ and the last accounts date to ca. 638 BC. The Gyges narrative is preserved in eight of the thirteen prism fragments presently assigned to the E Prisms.⁹ These pieces are:

- A. K 1821 (Novotny & Jeffers 2018, Ashurbanipal 1 ex. 1);
- B. A 7920 + A 8138 (Novotny & Jeffers 2018, Ashurbanipal 1 ex. 2);
- C. A 8130 (Novotny & Jeffers 2018, Ashurbanipal 1 ex. 3);
- D. BM 121018 (+) BM 128305 + BM 134481 (Novotny & Jeffers 2018, Ashurbanipal 2 ex. 1);
- E. BM 127923 + BM 128324 (Novotny & Jeffers 2018, Ashurbanipal 2 ex. 2);
- F. BM 127940 + BM 134455 (Novotny & Jeffers 2018, Ashurbanipal 2 ex. 3);
- G. BM 128306 + BM 134445 (Novotny & Jeffers 2018, Ashurbanipal 2 ex. 4);
- H. BM 134454 (Novotny & Jeffers 2018, Ashurbanipal 2 ex. 5).

According to Cogan and Tadmor’s 1977 assessment of the E Prisms, there were two distinct versions of the Gyges narrative. The longer and earlier report in the inscription that Cogan and Tadmor designated as Prism E₁ is inscribed on fragments A–C, while the shorter and later account included in the text that Cogan and Tadmor designated as Prism E₂ is known from fragments D–H. The two narratives are usually believed to have been composed ca. 666–665 BC and 665–664 BC respectively. However, a closer examination of the extant text of these purportedly divergent Gyges narratives reveals that scholarly interpretations about the earliest-composed passages recording Gyges’ first direct contact with Ashurbanipal might be wrong. Re-examination of the sources strongly suggests that Cogan and Tadmor’s Prism E₁ and Prism E₂ contained one and the same description of how the Lydian king came to send his envoy to the Assyrian capital. This new interpretation, if correct, impacts the currently-proposed chronological sequence of Ashurbanipal’s earlier inscriptions, as well as the number of texts currently designated as “Prism E”. Before diving into those matters, let us first present the evidence for the “E Prisms” containing an identical record about Gyges of Lydia, a ruler whose royal city Sardis was

It is certain that Prism G (Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 165–179 Ashurbanipal 8) also included a report about Gyges in its military narration, but it is not currently preserved in the positively-identified copies of that text. Prism H or Prism Jb (Novotny & Jeffers 2018, respectively 265–271 Ashurbanipal 12 and 271–278 Ashurbanipal 13) appears to have also included an account about the Lydian king, which is now evident from an unpublished prism fragment found at Babylon and now kept in the Vorderasiatisches Museum (BE 60493; VA Bab 616); the late date is confirmed by the mention of the Cimmerian ruler Tugdammû in the account of events in Tabal. Note, however, that no Gyges narrative was included in the Prism I and Prism T inscriptions (Novotny & Jeffers 2018, respectively 101–107 Ashurbanipal 5 and 209–211 Ashurbanipal 10).

- 8. Grayson 1980, 230, 232; and Aro-Valjus 1999, 428.
- 9. The five E Prisms fragments that do not preserve the Gyges report are: (1) K 1828; (2) Bu 89-4-26, 151; (3) BM 121029+; (4) A 8140; and (5) 81-7-27, 263. Fragments 82-5-22, 2, 82-5-22, 21, BM 128302+, and BM 99326 are not counted among these thirteen prism fragments since they likely belong to other inscriptions. For details, see Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 278–282 Ashurbanipal 14–15. Prism fragment 82-5-22, 2, however, will be discussed below in connection with Prism E-c, one of the newly-proposed designations for Cogan and Tadmor’s Prism E₁.

several hundred kilometers west of the westernmost province of the Assyrian Empire.¹⁰

2. Gyges' dream in a new light¹¹

In 2006, Annette Zgoll noted that the fragmentarily-preserved accounts of the Gyges narrative of Cogan and Tadmor's Prisms E₁ and E₂ had a single line in common (Gyges 31'): Prism E₂ fragments BM 121018+ iii' 4' and BM 128306 iii' 10' preserved the first half of the line, *ina šāt mūši*, "during th(at) night", while Prism E₁ fragment A 8130 i' 7' was inscribed with the second part of the line, *izzizam-ma*, "he appeared to me".¹² That line records that the Assyrian national god Aššur appeared to the Lydian king in a dream. Zgoll's astute observation is indeed correct, however, a closer examination of the extant source material of the Gyges narrative in the E Prism reveals that there are actually fifteen lines of Prisms E₁ and E₂ that overlap (Gyges 22'–36'), including the first seven lines of Gyges' dream (Gyges 30'–36'). This parallel has been long overlooked due to the poor state of preservation of that passage, specifically since the beginnings of the lines in question are preserved only in manuscripts that were classified as Prism E₂ and their respective ends are known only from manuscripts regarded as copies of Prism E₁. Because there has been no obvious duplication of the contents of this early version of the Gyges narrative, it has generally been assumed that Cogan and Tadmor's Prisms E₁ and E₂ contained divergent accounts, rather than an identical record, about how the Lydian king first came into contact with Ashurbanipal. With the newly-recognized, fifteen-line parallel in the E Prism material in mind, the entire report of the Lydian king's messenger to the Assyrian court at Nineveh (Gyges 18'–52'), in its Akkadian translation provided by an interpreter, now reads as follows:¹³

(18') [(...) *ušann*]ā *dabābšu* (19') [*umma*[?] *Gugg*] *u ardu pāliḫka* (20') [(o) o o o o] *utūl-ma* (21') [(o o) *šuttu i*] *naṭṭal* (22') x [o o o m] *ātātī*[?] (23') x [o o o (o) *šitk*] *unāt*[?] -*ma* (24') *kan*[*ūnu*[?] (o o) o]-*ḫu-ū* (25') *šēr mā*[*t*[?] (o) o-*r*]*i*[?]/*ḫ*]*u*[?] *napiḫ-ma* (26') *ana pāt gimr*[*ša na*] *mirtu šaknat* (27') *Aššur-bān-[ap]li šarru ša* (28') *kāma nūri namri* (29') *šūpū-ma kūn qerebša*
(30') *ušannī-ma bēl māātī ilū'a* (31') *ina šāt mūši izzizam-ma* (32') *kām iqbā* (33') *umma ša Aššur-bān-apli* [*šar*[?]] *māt*[?] -[*Aššu*]*r*[?] (34') *ḫišiḫti Aššur bēl*[?] *g[imri]*[?] (35') *šēpī bēlūtī*[*šu š*] *aba*[*t-ma*] (36') *ana epē*[*š ar*]*d* *ūt*[*išu*[?]] (37') [*libšā*[?] *u*] *znā*[*ka*[?]]

10. Que, which is in the Cilician plain (Classical *Cilicia Pedias*), was the westernmost Assyrian province. Its provincial capital, also called Que, is modern Adana. For details, see Radner 2006, 62 no. 57. See also the note to Gyges 2'–3' in the appendix. This is probably the place where Gyges' envoy entered Assyria, an event mentioned in Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 41 Ashurbanipal 1 (Prism E₁) vi 1'–6' (Gyges 1'–8'): "[*He (Gyges) sent*] his [*mes*]senger *wi*[*th him*] to inquire about my well-being (and) he a[p-p]roached the border of my land. The people of my land saw him and said to him: 'Who are you, stranger? A mounted messenger of yours has never taken the road to our territory'".
11. A score transliteration of the entire Gyges narrative, as it is currently preserved in the E Prisms, is presented in the appendix. The "Gyges" line numbers cited in this article refer to the line numbers of the master text of the Gyges narrative in E Prisms as it is presented in the appendix.
12. Zgoll 2006, 336 n. 642.
13. For details on the conventions used here, see the appendix.

(38')[*bēlūssu' pa*]lhiš *šullī*-[*ma*] (39')[*o o o-t*]e' *lillikū supp*[*ūka*]
 (40')[*kī' ann*]ā' *tētepšū-m*[*a*] (41')[*ša*] *ušabrūka tultalli*[*mu'*] (42')[*lā' kanšūt*]i?
nakirika (43')[*šapalk*]a' *ušakmas-ma* (44')[*tur*]assaba' *ina kakki*
 (45')[*šutti*] *aṭṭula aplaḥ-ma* (46')[*qibīt' i*]līya *ušallima* (47')[*(o) uša*]nnā *ana šarri*
 (48')[*ultu ūm*]i *annī* (49')*šattišam* [*l*]ā *naparkā* (50') *našāku* [*k*]abittu *biltu* (51')[*(o o)*
u an]a *šēr nakirīšu* (52')[*kayyān'*] *anāku lasmāku*

(18')[...] He (the Lydian *interpreter*) reported] his spe[e]ch to me, (19')[*saying*:
 “Gyge]s, the servant who rev[e]res you, (20')laid down [*one night* and (21')[s]aw
 [a (...) dream]: (22')... [... *l*]ands (23')... [... *was es*]tablished, but (25'a)over the
lan[d (of), (24')a [...] ... *bra*[*zier*] (25'b)was burning and (26')there was
 [bri]ghtness all around [it]. (27')Ashurban[ip]al, the king who (29'a)is resplendent
 (28')like a bright light, (29'b)was standing firmly inside it”.

(30')He then reported: “The lord of (all of) the lands, my god, (31')appeared to
 me (Gyges) during the night¹⁴ and (32')said the following to me: (35')*[G]ras[p]*
 the lordly feet (33')of Ashurbanipal, [*king*] of A[*ssyri*]a, (34')the one who is re-
 quired by (the god) Aššur, the *lord of e[verything]*. (37')*May your m[in*[*d be set*]
 (36')on doi[ng obeis]anc[e to him. (38')Rev]erently beseech [*his lordly majesty*
 and] (39')let [your] suppli[cations] go forth [...]...

(40')[*If*] you fulfill [(all of) *thi*]s a[nd] (41')*carry o[ut]* everything [that] I have
 revealed to you, (43'a)I will make (42')the [*unsubmissi*]ve, your enemies, (43'b)kneel
 down [*at your fee*]t so that (44')*[you can st]rike* (them) *down* with the sword”.

(45')I (Gyges) was frightened [by the dream that] I had seen (46')and (thus) I
 fulfilled [the *command*] of my [g]od (47')[by rep]orting it to the king (of Assyria).
 (48')[From] this (very) [da]y (onward), (50')(I decided that) I will bring (to him) a
 [su]bstantial tribute (49')yearly, [wit]hout ceasing, (51'a)[*and*] (52')I myself will
 [*constantly*] *lead campaigns* (51'b)[*a*]gainst his enemies”.

The Gyges narrative in the E Prisms is not only the earliest known account of the event, but also the longest, with (parts of) seventy lines preserved. The complete account seems to have been about 75 lines in length.¹⁵ Even though many new readings are presented in the text above, nothing substantial can be added to previous scholarly discussions about how the king of Lydia episode evolved in royal inscriptions over the course of Ashurbanipal's long reign, apart from the fact that there was one account, not two versions, of how Gyges came to contact Assyria for the first time in the E Prisms, which in itself is a significant contribution.¹⁶ For this reason, we would like to limit ourselves in this article to the dream account itself, where we can offer the most advances. The discussion will be subdivided into four parts, and will include comparisons with their counterparts in later versions of the event.

14. Or possibly “stood by me”.

15. See fns. 53–54, below, for information about the two breaks in the Gyges narrative.

16. See, for example, Cogan & Tadmor 1977, 74–81; Gelio 1981; and Fuchs 2010, 420f.

2.a. Gyges 22'–29': presentation of Ashurbanipal as a figure of salvation¹⁷

In the first section of the dream report, there is a *tableau vivant*-like scene that presents the Assyrian king almost as if he were a god. The Assyrian monarch is described as being “resplendent like a bright light” (Gyges 28'–29'). Unfortunately, the first three lines of the dream report (Gyges 22'–24') are not sufficiently preserved to be able to confidently restore their contents. Nevertheless, it is fairly clear that in Gyges' dream, Ashurbanipal, who is standing in the middle of a land (presumably Assyria), was a powerful, radiant beacon of light, while other (neighbouring) lands might possibly be described as being shrouded in darkness or in a state of confusion (Gyges 22'–23').¹⁸ In most subsequent editions of Ashurbanipal's annalistic texts, at least those composed until 645 BC, this part of the dream is reduced to the god Aššur revealing (*ušabrīšū-ma*) to Gyges the “(strong) radiance” of Ashurbanipal's “royal majesty” (*nibiṭ šarrūtīya*).¹⁹ In later texts, the object

17. This section parallels Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 62 Ashurbanipal 3 (Prism B) ii 89, 87 Ashurbanipal 4 (Prism D) ii 64', 145 Ashurbanipal 7 (Prism Kh) iii 20'', 194 Ashurbanipal 9 (Prism F) ii 13, 237 Ashurbanipal 11 (Prism A) ii 97, and 305 Ashurbanipal 23 (IIT) lines 86–88; and Jeffers & Novotny 2022, Ashurbanipal 207 (LET) rev. 21.
18. For further information, see the notes to these lines in the appendix.
19. The reading *nibiṭ šarrūtīya*, instead of the traditional *nibūt šarrūtīya*, follows AHW, 1580a. The LET inscription has *nibiṭ šarrūtīya kabti*, “the strong radiance of my royal majesty”, while Prisms B, D, Kh, and F have *nibiṭ šarrūtīya*, “the radiance of my royal majesty”, or possibly *nibūt šarrūtīya*, “the mention of my royal majesty”, and Prism A (and probably also the IIT inscription) has *nibūt šumīya*, “the mention of my name”. Most scholars who have studied or edited Ashurbanipal's inscriptions, beginning with G. Smith in 1871, have misinterpreted *nibiṭ šarrūtīya* (at least in the LET inscription, which was no less than thirteen years earlier than Prism B); for example, A.L. Oppenheim (1955, 202) stated: “Hence Gyges probably saw the name of Ashurbanipal ... in a Lydian (phonetic) transcription”. This is largely due to the fact that *nibītu* is a commonly-attested word in Akkadian texts, including inscriptions of Ashurbanipal, whereas *nibṭu* is not. Moreover, *nibītu*, “mention”, is clearly used in Ashurbanipal Prism A (ii 97) in conjunction with *šumu*, “name”, and *nibūt šumīya kabti*, “the mention of my important name”, appears in one inscription of Esarhaddon (Leichty 2011, 15 Esarhaddon 1 [Nineveh A] ii 33); compare also *zikir šumīya kabti* in Jeffers & Novotny 2022, Ashurbanipal 220 [L⁴] ii 13'. Unlike in the Esarhaddon attestation, where the adjective modifies the masculine *nomen rectum* (*šumu*), the masculine adjective *kabtu* in the LET Inscription is incongruent with *nibītu*, “mention”, and *šarrūtu*, “royal majesty”, since both words should be modified by a feminine adjective (*kabittu*). Thus, given that *nibṭu*, “radiance”, is masculine, it seems more likely that that word, the *nomen regens*, is qualified by the masculine form of *kabtu*, despite the fact that the form is *kab-ti* (genitive), instead of the expected *kab-tu* (accusative). Because the Gyges narrative in the E Prisms emphasizes Ashurbanipal's luminous appearance (Gyges 25'–28'), *nibṭu* seems more likely an interpretation for *ni-É* (read as *ni-biṭ*), rather than *nibītu* (read as *ni-bit*), certainly in the LET inscription; given the long span of time between the composition of the LET and Prism B inscriptions, it is unclear if *ni-É* should be read as *ni-biṭ* or *ni-bit* in Prisms B, D, Kh, and F. The word *šarrūtu* does appear as the *nomen rectum* of construct-genitive constructions that are modified by an adjective. In all known instances in extant Assyrian royal inscriptions, the following adjective is always masculine and always modifies the *nomen regens*, never the *nomen rectum* *šarrūtu*. Compare Grayson 1987, 136 A.0.73.6 (Adad-nārārī I) line 27 (*āl šarrūtīšu rabā*); Grayson 1991, 34 A.0.87.2 (Tiglath-pileser I) line 32 (*āl šarrūtīšu rabā*); Grayson 1996, 20 A.0.102.2 (Shalmaneser III) ii 44 (*šalam šarrūtīšu šurbā*), 185 A.0.103.1 (Šamši-Adad V) iii 20–21; Tadmor & Yamada 2011, 97 Tiglath-pileser III 39 line 9 (*āl šarrūtīšu rabā*); and Leichty 2011, 105 Esarhaddon 48 line 35 (*zēr šarrūti dārū*). Moreover, in the known 1389 attestations of *šarrūtu* in published Assyrian royal inscriptions, that Akkadian word is never once modified by an adjective. Based on this evidence, the *kabtu* in *ni-É šarrūtīya kabti* almost

revealed to Gyges is changed from Ashurbanipal’s (bright) radiance to the “mention” of his “name” (*nibīt šumīya*). This alteration might also reflect the fact that Gyges continued to prove himself on the battlefield, something that is subtly alluded to in the narrative of Prism A, the earliest text in which the change from *nibiṭ šarrūtīya* to *nibīt šumīya* is attested. As Cogan and Tadmor suggest, it is the “charm-like use of the monarch’s name”, at least according to the Prism A version of the Gyges narrative, that enables the Lydian king to subdue his foes, the Cimmerians.²⁰

2.b. Gyges 30’–39’: Aššur’s command²¹

This section begins with the first-person narrator (Ashurbanipal, in whose name the E Prisms are composed) drawing attention to the fact that Gyges’ dream was being reported to him by an interpreter. The continued reporting of the night vision of the Lydian ruler is marked in the text with *ušannī-ma*, “he (the interpreter) then reported”. This insertion might have also served as a means to prepare the inscription’s audience for the ensuing change in perspective from third to first person, which might have also been deliberately chosen for dramatic effect. In the dream, Aššur appears to Gyges, stands beside him (as deities usually do in literary accounts of dreams),²² and tells him to submit himself to the king of Assyria. The wording is very similar to the Gyges account included in the slightly later Large Egyptian Tablet (LET) inscription (r.22–24):

(r.22) *umma ša Aššur-bān-apli šar māt–Aššur ḥišiḥti Aššur šar ilāni bēl gimri*
(r.23) *šēpī rubūtīšu šabat-ma šarrūssu pitluḥ-ma šullā bēlūssu* (r.24) *ša ēpiš ardūti*
u nādin mandatti lillikūš suppūka

Grasp the princely feet of Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria, the one who is required by (the god) Aššur — the king of the gods, the lord of everything — and (then) revere his royal majesty and beseech his lordly majesty. Let your supplications go to him as one who does obeisance and gives payments.²³

In later versions of the Gyges narrative (Prism A, IIT), Aššur’s command and Ashurbanipal’s titulary are abridged to *šēpī Aššur-bān-apli šar māt–Aššur šabat-ma*, “grasp the feet of Ashurbanipal, king of Assyria”.²⁴

2.c. Gyges 40’–44’: Aššur’s promise²⁵

In exchange for carrying out his divine commands, the Assyrian national god promises

certainly modifies the *nomen regens*, which is presumably the masculine noun *nibṭu*, which directly references/refers to Gyges 25’–28’ in the E Prisms.

20. Cogan & Tadmor 1977, 78. See also the section “Aššur’s promise” below.

21. This section parallels Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 237 Ashurbanipal 11 (Prism A) ii 98, and 305 Ashurbanipal 23 (IIT) line 87; and Jeffers & Novotny 2022, Ashurbanipal 207 (LET) r.22–24. The “Aššur’s command” section is not included in Ashurbanipal Prisms B, D, C, Kh, G, and F.

22. See Zgoll 2006, 262f.

23. Jeffers & Novotny 2022, Ashurbanipal 207 (LET).

24. Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 237 Ashurbanipal 11 (Prism A) ii 98.

25. Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 237 Ashurbanipal 11 (Prism A) ii 98, and 305 Ashurbanipal 23 (IIT) line 87.

Gyges that he will help him defeat his enemies, the Cimmerians. While a direct counterpart to this aspect of Aššur's speech is found only in the late inscriptions, Prism A and IIT (*ina zikir šumīšu kušud nakirīka*, “conquer your enemies through the mention of his [Ashurbanipal's] name”), all annalistic texts of Ashurbanipal composed after the E Prisms include a description of the actual fulfillment of the promise that Aššur had made to the Lydian king if he had complied to his command, which he did by sending his envoy to Nineveh.²⁶ Because the narrative in the E Prisms is structured differently than the reports included in later “annals” — it records the defeat of the Cimmerians before the long recitation of the dream by the Lydian envoy at the Assyrian court, rather than first stating that Gyges had a dream, then recording that he defeated his foes — this early account does not include a statement about how Aššur fulfilled his promise to Gyges. Instead, it merely states that Ashurbanipal replied by sending a messenger to visit Gyges, whose capital Sardis was situated far beyond the borders of the Assyrian Empire.²⁷

2.d. Gyges 45'–52': Gyges describing his reaction and declaring his submission²⁸

In the last section of the dream account, as it is reported by Gyges' envoy and interpreter in Ashurbanipal's court, the Lydian king describes how he planned to reverently fulfill the divine command(s) that he had received from the Assyrian king's patron deity in his dream, principally by declaring himself an obedient, tribute-providing Assyrian vassal. This section is not included in later versions of the Gyges episode. None of the post-E-Prism accounts include any of the Lydian king's spoken words, but only (part of) the Assyrian national god's direct speech. Moreover, those “annals” editions also state that Gyges, on the very day the god Aššur had appeared to him in a dream, sent his envoy to Nineveh.²⁹ The sensation that that event caused in the Assyrian court is also not included in later reports about the Lydian king

3. The three E prisms: E-a, E-b, and E-c

The reconstruction and interpretation of the Gyges narrative in Ashurbanipal's E Prisms proposed in this article differs significantly from those first suggested by Cogan and Tadmor in 1977 and, thus, the classification of these inscriptions and the chronological

26. Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 62f. Ashurbanipal 3 (Prism B) ii 92–iii 4, 87 Ashurbanipal 4 (Prism D) ii 67'–72', 121 Ashurbanipal 6 (Prism C) iv 1'–7', 146 Ashurbanipal 7 (Prism Kh) iii 24''–30'', 195 Ashurbanipal 9 (Prism F) ii 16–20, 237 Ashurbanipal 11 (Prism A) ii 103–110, and 305 Ashurbanipal 23 (IIT) lines 88–89; and Jeffers & Novotny 2022, Ashurbanipal 207 (LET) r.26.

27. See Gyges 2''–3'' and the note to those lines in the appendix.

28. There are no direct parallels to this passage in later annalistic texts of Ashurbanipal.

29. *ūmu šuttu annītu imuru ana ša 'āl šulmīya rakbūšu išpura*, “on the (very) day he saw this dream, he sent his mounted messenger before me to inquire about my well-being”; Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 62 Ashurbanipal 3 (Prism B) ii 90–91, 87 Ashurbanipal 4 (Prism D) ii 65'–66', 146 Ashurbanipal 7 (Prism Kh) iii 22''–23'', 195 Ashurbanipal 9 (Prism F) ii 14–15, and 237 Ashurbanipal 11 (Prism A) ii 100–101; and Jeffers & Novotny 2022, Ashurbanipal 207 (LET) r.25. Compare Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 305 Ashurbanipal 23 (IIT) line 89. Prism A ii 101–102 adds *šuttu annītu ša imuru ina qātī mār-šiprīšu išpuramma ušannā yāti*, “(as for) this dream that he had seen, he sent (a message about it) by the hands of a messenger of his and he reported (it) to me”.

sequence in which they were written need to be revised.³⁰ Assuming that the fragments presently classified as “E Prisms” contained one and the same report of the Lydian king’s first direct contact with Ashurbanipal, then there must have been at least three, not two, different inscriptions represented among the eight prism fragments discussed in this paper. The principal exemplars of these three ‘annals’ recensions, according to their new designations, are:

1. Prism E-a = A 7920+A 8138 (Novotny & Jeffers 2018, Ashurbanipal 1 ex. 2 = Prism E₁);
2. Prism E-b = BM 134454 (Novotny & Jeffers 2018, Ashurbanipal 2 ex. 5 = Prism E₂);
3. Prism E-c = K 1821 (Novotny & Jeffers 2018, Ashurbanipal 1 ex. 1 = Prism E₁).³¹

Moreover, the chronological ordering of Cogan and Tadmor’s Prisms E₁ and E₂ needs to be updated since their Prism E₂ appears to have been written earlier than their Prism E₁ (at least as the text is represented on fragment K 1821).

3.a. *Prisms E-a and E-b*

There is at least one certain exemplar of Prism E-a and one positively identified copy of Prism E-b. The former is represented by A 7920 + A 8138 and the latter by BM 134454. E-a is distinguished from E-b on the basis of their divergent building accounts. Prism E-a (A 7920+) described the rebuilding of the replacement House of Succession, Ashurbanipal’s own palace (and likely the place where he was born),³² and Prism E-b (BM 134454) recorded work on the citadel wall of Nineveh. It is assumed here that these two annalistic texts had identical prologues and military narration, which was not unusual for late Neo-Assyrian inscriptions; compare, for example, Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 57–80 Ashurbanipal 3 (Prism B) to 82–100 Ashurbanipal 4 (Prism D).³³ Despite their poor states of pre-

30. For a recent study, see Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 38f.

31. The authors have thought it best to differentiate the new E designations with letters, rather than with (subscripted) numbers, so that there would be no confusion with the designations assigned to the E Prisms by Cogan and Tadmor. Therefore, E-a, E-b, and E-c have been proposed here instead of E-1, E-2, and E-3 or E₁, E₂, and E₃.

32. Ashurbanipal’s place of birth is not recorded in extant cuneiform sources, but it is tentatively assumed here that he was born in Nineveh, in the House of Succession, just like his father Esarhaddon, who is said to have been born in that palace; see Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 192 Ashurbanipal 9 (Prism F) i 20–21a, and 231 Ashurbanipal 11 (Prism 11) i 27–28a.

33. The dated copies of Ashurbanipal 3 (Prism B) were inscribed in the eponymies of Ahu-ilā’ī, governor of Carchemish (649), and Bēlšunu, governor of Hindānu (648*), and those of Ashurbanipal 4 (Prism D) were written in the eponym year of Bēlšunu. Given that only the building reports of these two inscriptions are different — Ashurbanipal 3 (Prism B) recorded renovations made to a wing of the armory and Ashurbanipal 4 (Prism D) described repairs made to the citadel wall — it is possible that some copies of Ashurbanipal 4 (Prism D) might have been inscribed in 649. In addition, compare Ashurbanipal 7 (Prisms Kh) to Ashurbanipal 8 (Prism G). These two texts were both composed in the same year (646* = eponymy of Nabû-nādin-ahi, governor of Kār-Shalmaneser), had identical prologues and similar descriptions of Ashurbanipal’s victories on the battlefield, but described work on different structures; Prism Kh recorded the rebuilding of (part) of the Nabû temple Ezida at Kalhu and Prism G described repairs made to Nineveh’s citadel wall. For similar examples in the reign of Ashurbanipal’s grandfather Sennacherib, compare, for example, Grayson & Novotny 2012, 172–186 Sennacherib 22 to 148–161 Sennacherib 18, 188–203 Sennacherib 23, and to Grayson & Novotny 2014: 34–235 Sennacherib 164. The prologue, military reports, and building accounts of texts written around the same time could be interchanged. This seems to have been the case with Prisms E-a and E-b.

servation, both inscriptions likely recorded (1) Ashurbanipal's nomination as heir designate of Assyria and his subsequent education in the House of Succession; (2) his first campaign to Egypt; (3) the conquest of the city Qirbit; and (4) a narrative describing how Gyges, after having inflicted a major defeat on the Cimmerians, sent an envoy of his to the Assyrian capital with an audience gift. As far as it is possible to tell, especially given the fragmentary nature of all of the earlier prism material of Ashurbanipal, the latest historical event in both inscriptions is possibly the Gyges narrative.³⁴

Because it is assumed here that both Prism E-a and Prism E-b contained identical prologues and military narration (apart from the expected minor, orthographic variants), the two inscriptions were likely written on prisms concurrently, or perhaps within a year of one another. Both of these early texts of Ashurbanipal were probably written (shortly) after the Lydian king's envoy arrived in the Assyrian capital, an event assumed to be the *terminus post quem*, and, thus, both texts were likely written ca. 666–665 BC.³⁵

Since A 8130, BM 121018+, BM 127923+, BM 127940+, and BM 128306+ are not sufficiently preserved — that is, they do not contain part of a building report — it is not yet possible to determine whether these prism fragments bear copies of Prism E-a or Prism E-b.³⁶ The same is true of K 1828, Bu 89-4-26, 151, BM 121029+, A 8140, and 81-7-27, 263, all of which break off before the Gyges narrative and the building report.³⁷

3.b. Prism E-c

This inscription of Ashurbanipal is represented solely by K 1821.³⁸ Prism E-c, of which only twenty-seven lines are extant, appears to have contained at least two other reports in its military narration. The first was inserted between the description of the conquest of Qirbit, an event that took place in 668 BC,³⁹ and the Gyges narrative; and the second, which is now completely destroyed, was added after the account about the Lydian king establishing relations with Ashurbanipal. Based on this interpretation, K 1821 cols. i' and ii' would have been cols. iv and v of a hexagonal prism. Prism E-c col. iv would have contained the end of the Qirbit report, a description of a hitherto not-yet-positively identi-

34. On the date, see fn.1, above. One cannot exclude, however, the possibility that the first Egyptian campaign is the latest historical event recorded in those two texts. The date of that event, 667 BC, is recorded in the Babylonian Chronicle (Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 34). Following Grayson 1980 and Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 16, Gyges' first contact with Ashurbanipal is tentatively regarded as taking place after the first Egyptian campaign, although this cannot be proven with certainty.

35. The proposed date is the one that is traditionally suggested for Cogan and Tadmor's Prism E₁.

36. These fragments are respectively Novotny & Jeffers 2018, Ashurbanipal 1 ex. 3 and Ashurbanipal 2 exs. 1–4.

37. These fragments are Novotny & Jeffers 2018, Ashurbanipal 2 exs. 1*–5*. It is possible that one or more of these pieces could be exemplars of Prism E-c (see below), rather than of Prisms E-a or E-b.

38. This fragment was one of the three principal exemplars of Cogan and Tadmor's Prism E₁. As for the other two exemplars, A 7920+ is now regarded as the principal exemplar of Prism E-a and A 8130 is now thought to be either a copy of Prism E-a or Prism E-b; the later fragment is not sufficiently preserved to be able to classify it with certainty.

39. The date is known from two Babylonian Chronicles, which date the capture of Qirbit to 668 BC; see Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 34.

fied event,⁴⁰ and the beginning of the Gyges narrative (= Gyges 1–3’); col. v would have included the rest of the Gyges account (= Gyges 4’–3’’) and very likely the beginning of a description of another military/political/hunting success of Ashurbanipal; and col. vi very plausibly contained the end of the military narration, the building report, concluding formula, and the date of composition. It is unclear which new events were recorded in Prism E-c, but these might have been (1) the receipt of tribute from Yakīn-Lû of Arwad and/or Mugallu of Tabal, events that are generally thought to have been recorded for the first time in Ashurbanipal’s Large Egyptian Tablets (LET) Inscription,⁴¹ and (2) a lion hunt, as suggested already nearly twenty-five years ago by Elnathan Weissert.⁴² Thus, after the reports of the king’s successes in Egypt and at Qirbit, it is likely that Prism E-c included descriptions of (1) the voluntary submission of one or more rulers in the Levant and Anatolia (Yakīn-Lû and/or Mugallu), (2) Gyges’ first direct contact with the Assyrian Empire (the same account that was included in the earlier E-a and E-b inscriptions), (3) a lion hunt,⁴³ and (4) construction of a building (perhaps the House of Succession) or wall (possibly the citadel wall) at Nineveh.

As for the event(s) included between the reports of the conquest of Qirbit and Gyges’ first contact with Ashurbanipal,⁴⁴ based on the arrangement of military narration in Ashurbanipal’s inscriptions — which was generally in a clockwise direction, beginning with Egypt, and then continuing with the Levant and Anatolia, Qirbit, Mannea, Media and Elam, Babylonia and Gambulu, and concluding with Arabia — and the general date

40. Some scholars have erroneously treated this “intermezzo-like passage” after the Qirbit account as part of the Gyges narrative. For the opinion that these five poorly-preserved lines are not the beginning of a report about the Lydian king, see, for example, Weissert 1997, 340 (n. 6).
41. Jeffers & Novotny 2022, Ashurbanipal 207 (LET) r.28–37. Grayson (1980: 232f.) dates Yakīn-Lû’s sending of tribute to 667 BC and Mugallu’s voluntary submission to ca. 662 BC.
42. Weissert 1997 (especially p. 340 n. 6). The text of 82-5-22, 2, a prism fragment inscribed with an account of a lion hunt, was edited as Ashurbanipal 14 in Novotny & Jeffers 2018.
43. If there was in fact a lion hunt, then it is not impossible that 82-5-22, 2 and K 1821 come from one and the same six-sided clay prism, as Weissert has already proposed (1997, 340 n. 6): “Ascribing 82-5-22, 2 and K 1821 to the same sub-edition of Prism E does not, of course, imply that they must belong to one and the same manuscript; however, the estimated width of the columns, the substance of the clay, and especially the extremely erratic spacing of the signs on both fragments, may point to their mutual physical origin”. As for the passage’s placement before the building report, Weissert stated the following: “From the historical point of view, the hunting episode in 82-5-22, 2 fits remarkably well into an intermezzo-like passage following the military narrative, since this is exactly the place where the motif of the royal hunt had normally been integrated into the ‘annals’ of Assyrian kings during the 11th–9th centuries BCE”. For example, compare Grayson 1991, 25f. A.O.87.1 (Tiglath-pileser I) vi 55–84. Weissert’s proposed non-physical join 82-5-22, 2 and K 1821 was rejected by Novotny & Jeffers (2018, 39) “since there might not have been enough space for a report about a lion hunt and an *akītu*-festival between the Gyges narrative and the building report”. Based on the interpretation of the Gyges narrative presented in this article, Weissert’s proposal seems more likely and is tentatively accepted here, despite the fact the join cannot be proven with certainty. This is principally because the other two exemplars of Cogan & Tadmor’s Prism E₁ (A 7920+ and A 8130) are now regarded as belonging to different inscriptions than K 1821 (+)[?] 82-5-22, 2; see the section “Prisms E-a and E-b” above for further information.
44. Only parts of the first five lines of this passage are preserved. See Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 41 Ashurbanipal 1 (Prism E₁) vi 11–15: “[...] I [...] ... [...] sun [...] they [kiss]ed my feet [...] ...”.

of the text (see below), it seems highly probable that the military narration of Prism E-c included an account of the receipt of tribute from one or more western rulers.⁴⁵ Since a firm date of composition cannot yet be established for this fragmentarily preserved annalistic text, it is unclear if Prism E-c recorded both the voluntary submissions of Yakīn-Lû of Arwad and Mugallu of Tabal, or just that of the former ruler. The passage in question might have paralleled (in part or in full) the Large Egyptian Tablets (LET) Inscription r.28–37, which would have been inscribed in approximately twenty lines at most and would have easily fit between the Qirbit and Gyges narratives.⁴⁶ If Prism E-c recorded only the payment of tribute from Yakīn-Lû, an event generally dated to 667 BC, then it is likely that this inscription was composed ca. 665–664 BC.⁴⁷ If it also included a statement about the submission of Mugallu, which many scholars date to ca. 662 BC, then it is possible that Prism E-c might have been composed marginally later, perhaps in 663 BC or even 662 BC. The earliest certain attestation of the receipt of tribute from Tabal is recorded in the LET Inscription, an undated text composed after the conquest of Thebes during Ashurbanipal's second Egyptian campaign (ca. 664 BC), and, thus, the actual date that Mugallu sent a payment to Ashurbanipal is still unknown. Given the lack of firm evidence for the dating of this event, the possibility that Tabal's ruler sent tribute to Nineveh earlier than Ashurbanipal's seventh regnal year (662 BC) cannot be ruled out. Since there was likely space in Prism E-c col. iv to record both the receipt from Arwad and Tabal, it is plausible that Prism E-c, not the LET Inscription, was the earliest of Ashurbanipal's extant inscriptions to include descriptions of the voluntary submission of these two kings. If this proves correct, then it is not impossible that Prism E-c was still composed ca. 665–664 BC, and not one or two years later, in 663 BC or 662 BC.

However, if Mugallu did send tribute to Ashurbanipal after the defeat of Tanutamoni and the sack of Thebes in ca. 664 BC, then, if this event was recorded in Prism E-c, one would expect that this inscription would have also included a report of the second Egyptian campaign. Should it have (more or less) duplicated the account in the LET Inscription,⁴⁸ then that description would have been inscribed on the prism in approximately twenty-eight lines, which would have taken up approximately thirty-five to forty percent of a column, depending on the number of lines in each column. If Prism E-c did include a record of the second Egyptian campaign, then that inscription might have been composed in either 663 BC or 662 BC.

Since only twenty-seven lines of Prism E-c are preserved, little can be said with certainty about the contents and date of composition of this inscription of Ashurbanipal.⁴⁹

45. Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 2f.

46. Jeffers & Novotny 2022, Ashurbanipal 207 (LET).

47. The proposed date is the one that is traditionally suggested for Cogan and Tadmor's Prism E₂.

48. Jeffers & Novotny 2022, Ashurbanipal 207 (LET) obv. 70'–r.11.

49. The possible contents of the military narration (including the intermezzo-style passage) of Prism E-c, from longest to shortest, are: (1) reports of the first and second Egyptian campaigns, the conquest of Qirbit, the voluntary submission of Yakīn-Lû and Mugallu, the Gyges of Lydia narrative, and the lion hunt near Arbela; (2) accounts of the first and second Egyptian campaigns, the conquest of Qirbit, the voluntary submission of Yakīn-Lû, the Gyges of Lydia narrative, and the lion hunt near Arbela; (3) descriptions of the first Egyptian campaign, the conquest of Qirbit, the voluntary submission of Yakīn-

Despite the fact that almost nothing of the complete text remains, it is clear, however, that Prism E-c is later in date than Prism E-a and Prism E-b and, thus, was likely composed no earlier than 665 BC or 664 BC. Depending on its latest dateable event (the second Egyptian campaign or the submission of Mugallu, if it indeed took place after the sack of Thebes), Prism E-c might have been written later than originally thought, either in 663 BC or 662 BC. Until a better-preserved copy of this text comes to light, many issues about this text will remain unresolved. Although it cannot be proven, we tentatively propose that Prism E-c was composed 665–664 BC, more or less following the traditional dating of the E Prisms, even if it included an account of the king of Tabal’s sending tribute to Ashurbanipal.

4. Conclusion

In sum, the earliest inscriptions of Ashurbanipal written on clay prisms all appear to have included one and the same description of Gyges’ dream and subsequent sending of an audience gift to Ashurbanipal in Nineveh. There were not, as Cogan and Tadmor had convincingly argued in 1977, a longer and a shorter account of this event in Ashurbanipal’s E Prisms, but a single description that was used in at least three different versions of Ashurbanipal’s “annals”: Prism E-a, Prism E-b, and Prism E-c.

Prism E-a and Prism E-b, which might have had identical prologues and reports of the Assyrian king’s military and political successes, were the earliest of the three E Prisms and might have been written concurrently, perhaps in 666 BC or 665 BC, (shortly) after the Lydian envoy arrived in Nineveh bearing gifts and captive Cimmerians. In content, those two inscriptions were the same, apart from their building accounts, which recounted the construction of different structures in the Assyrian capital Nineveh; Prism E-a described the rebuilding and expansion of Ashurbanipal’s palace (the House of Succession), while Prism E-b recorded work on Nineveh’s citadel wall. Prism E-c is the latest of the three inscriptions and it was possibly written one or two years later than Prisms E-a and E-b, perhaps in 665 BC, 664 BC, or even 663 BC or 662 BC. Based on the distribution of the extant contents of K 1821, it is now fairly certain that Prism E-c had at least two, if not three, more reports in its military narration than Prisms E-a and E-b. These might have been a description of an account of the receipt of tribute from Yakīn-Lû of Arwad and/or Mugallu of Tabal, a lion hunt (as suggested many years ago by Weissert), and possibly even a report of the second Egyptian campaign, although this is far less certain. If Prism E-c did include a description of the defeat of Tanutamoni and the sack of Thebes, then that inscription might have been composed ca. 663 BC or 662 BC, around the same time as the Large Egyptian Tablets (LET).

Given the fragmentary state of preservation of these three inscriptions, it is not yet possible to confirm the proposals made in this article with absolute certainty. Therefore, the conclusions made here must remain tentative until more intact copies of these texts come to light.

Lû and Mugallu, the Gyges of Lydia narrative, and the lion hunt near Arbela; and (4) reports of the first Egyptian campaign, the conquest of Qirbit, the voluntary submission of Yakīn-Lû, the Gyges of Lydia narrative, and the lion hunt near Arbela.

APPENDIX

SCORE EDITION OF THE GYGES NARRATIVE

The editorial conventions used here generally follow the standards of the eBL Project,⁵⁰ adapted to the SAA guidelines, and with the addition of the following symbols: (1) the left and right arrows refer to the continuation of lines of text in the individual manuscripts (\rightarrow = text continues in the next line of the master text and \leftarrow = text continued from the previous line of the master text); and (2) the vertical four dots ($\ddot{}$) are used to signify the right boundary of a column when sign(s) are written in the blank space separating two columns of text. Moreover, in the master line transcription, (1) Assyrian *e*-vowels are rendered with their Standard Babylonian *i*-vowel counterparts; and (2) it is assumed that singular nominative and accusative case endings were identical and that there was only one case ending for the plural.

New editions of the E Prisms, with updated English translations, will appear in Novotny & Jeffers 2022, as part of an addendum to the texts edited in the Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period (RINAP) Project, headed by Grant Frame at the University of Pennsylvania.⁵¹

Identified E Prism Exemplars with the Gyges Narrative

<i>Signum</i>	<i>Museum Number</i>	<i>E Prism Edition</i>	<i>Lines Preserved</i>
A	K 1821	E-c	Gyges 4'-18'
B	A 7920 + A 8138	E-a	Gyges 1'-26'
C	A 8130 ⁵²	E-a or E-b	Gyges 25'-33'
D	BM 121018 (+) BM 128305 + BM 134481	E-a or E-b	Gyges 1, 28'-36'
E	BM 127923 + BM 128324	E-a or E-b	Gyges 34'-50'
F	BM 127940 + BM 134455	E-a or E-b	Gyges 42'-56'
G	BM 128306 + BM 134445	E-a or E-b	Gyges 22'-36'
H	BM 134454	E-b	Gyges 1-12, 1''-3''

50. [https://github.com/ElectronicBabylonianLiterature/generic-documentation/wiki/Editorial-conventions-\(Corpus\)](https://github.com/ElectronicBabylonianLiterature/generic-documentation/wiki/Editorial-conventions-(Corpus)).

51. Annotated editions of the complete corpus of Neo-Assyrian inscriptions are accessible at <http://oracc.org/rinap/pager>.

52. It is possible that A 8130 and BM 121018+ belong to one and the same prism. The two pieces have six lines (Gyges 28'-33') in common, with the latter containing the beginnings of the lines and the former the ends of the lines. The proposed join is not seamless, as far as can be confirmed from photographs. Should the two fragments actually join, they would still have a small break on the surface, which is less than ideal. The base of BM 121018+ is preserved, while it is not in A 8130. The inner core of the latter, however, does extend almost as far as the base of the former, which means that the pieces could belong to one and the same prism; it is certain that A 8130 originates from near the bottom of the prism since traces of the date are preserved in col. ii'. Should the pieces join, the resulting column width would match that of BM 121018+ col. ii'. Because the fragments are housed in different museum collections and because we cannot physically confirm the join, the proposal must remain conjectural for now. For this reason, A 8130 and BM 121018+ are edited here as different manuscripts of the Gyges narrative.

Score Transliteration

- 1 [G]u[ggu] šar Lud[dī]
D iii' 14 [ᵐg]u-u[g-gu o o o o o] (*break*)
H i' 6' [o o o o] MAN KUR.lu-ud-[dī]
- 2 [ašru] rūqu
H i' 7' [(o o) o o] ru-ú-ᵑquᵑ
- 3 [(o o) o o la]pānᵑ māṭ-Aššur
H i' 8' [(o o) o o laᵑ]-pa-an KUR-aš*+šur.KI
- 4 [šaᵑ urḫīšuᵑ lā p]etû nesû ālšu
H i' 9' [o o o o o p]e-tu-u né-su-u ᵑURUᵑ-šú
- 5 [ša šarrāni āl]ikūt maḥri abbīya
H i' 10' [o o o o a-l]i-kut maḥ-ri AD.MEŠ-ia
- 6 [lā išmû z]ikir šumīšu
H i' 11' [o o o o z]i-kir MU-šú
- 7 [o o o] x rapšā/atu(m)-ma
H i' 12' [o o o] x rap-šá-tu-ma
- 8 [(o o) o o] x šuklulū/u
H i' 13' [(o o) o o] x šuk-lu-lu
- 9 [(o) o o] x emūqīᵑi
H i' 14' [(o) o o] x e-mu-qi
- 10 [šaᵑ Gimi]rāyī nakru akšu
H i' 15' [o LÚ.gi-mi]r-ra-a-a LÚ.KÚR ak-šu
- 11 [(o) o o]-ᵑúᵑᵑ ina tamḥāri
H i' 16' [(o) o o]-ᵑúᵑᵑ ina tam-ḥa-ri
- 12 [(o) o inaᵑ kakk]iᵑ ušamqit[u (o)]
H i' 17' [(o) o o GIŠᵑ.TUKU]Lᵑ ᵑúᵑ-šam-ᵑqīᵑ-t[úᵑ (o)] (*break*)
- (lacuna of ca. 5 lines⁵³)
- 1' [...] x (x) [o o]
B i' 1' [...] x (x) [o o]

53. The length of this lacuna is based on the remains of the first Egyptian campaign account in BM 121018+ col. i' with its close parallel in the LET inscription (Jeffers & Novotny 2022, Ashurbanipal 207 [LET] obv. 25'–45'). Based on this, that prism, when complete, probably would have had an average of ca. 65 lines per column; see Onasch 1994, vol. 1, 102. However, since the number of lines inscribed in the individual columns of a prism could vary, a certain degree of uncertainty still remains in the estimation of the break between Gyges 12 and 1'.

- 2' [išpur² mār]–šiprīšu it[tišu²]
 B i' 2' [o o o o]–^ʿKIN-šú^ʿ it-[ti²-šú²]
- 3' ana ša'āl šulmīya
 B i' 3' ^ʿa-na šá^ʿ-^ʿa-al šul-^ʿmi^ʿ-ia
- 4' iṭhâ ana mišir mātīya
 A i' 1'–ii' 1 [o o o] (*end of column*) | a-na mi-šir KUR-ia →
 B i' 4' ^ʿiṭ^ʿ-ḥa-a a-na mi-šir KUR-ia
- 5' nišī mātīya imurūšū-ma
 A ii' 1b ← UN.MEŠ KUR-ia ^ʿe^ʿ-[mu-ru-šu-ma]
 B i' 5' [U]N.MEŠ KUR-ia i-mu-ru-šu-ma
- 6' mannummê attâ aḥû iqbûšu
 A ii' 2 man-nu-me-e at-ta a-hu-u iq-b[u-ú²-šú]
 B i' 6' [man-n]u-me at-ta a-ḥu-u iq-bu-šú
- 7' ša matīma rakbûkun
 A ii' 3 ša ma-ti-ma LÚ.RA.GABA-^ʿú^ʿ-[ku-un]
 B i' 7' [o ma]-te-ma LÚ.RA.GABA-ú-ku-un
- 8' daraggu lā iškuna ana kisurrīni
 A ii' 4 da-rag-gu la iš-ku-na a-na ki-[sur-ri-ni]
 B i' 8' [da-ra]g-gu la iš-ku-na a-na ki-sur-ri-ⁿⁱ
- 9' ana Ninua āl bēlūtīya [ḥanṭiš²]
 A ii' 5 a-na NINA.KI URU be-lu-ti-ia [o o (o o)]
 B i' 9'–10'a [o o N]INA.KI URU be-lu-ti-ia | [o o (o)] →
- 10' ubilūniššu ina maḥrīya
 A ii' 6 ú-bi-lu-ni-šú ina maḥ-[ri-ia]
 B i' 10'b ← ^ʿú^ʿ-bi-lu-ni-šú ina maḥ-ri-ia
- 11' lišānāt šīt šamši ereb šamši
 A ii' 7 EME.MEŠ ši-it ^dUTU-ši e-re[b o o o]
 B i' 11' [o o š]i-it ^dUTU-ši e-reb ^dUTU-ši
- 12' ša Aššur umallû qātū 'a
 A ii' 8 ša AN.ŠÁR ú-ma-al-lu-u q[a-tu-u-a]
 B i' 12' [o ^daš+š]ur ú-mal-lu-u ^ʿqa^ʿ-tu-u-a
- 13' bēl lišānīšu ul ibšī-ma
 A ii' 9a be-el EME-šú ul ib-ši-ma →
 B i' 13' [o li-šá]-ni-šú ul ^ʿib^ʿ-ši-ma
- 14' lišān[š]u nakrat-ma
 A ii' 9b ← ^ʿEME^ʿ-š[ú o o o o]
 B i' 14' [li-šá-an-š]u na-ak-rat-ma

- 15' *lā išemmû atmûšu*
 A ii' 10 *la i-šem-mu-ú* [o o o (o)]
 B i' 15' [o i-še]m-mu-ú at-mu-šú
- 16' *ultu mišir mātīšu*
 A ii' 11a *ul-tu mi-šir* KUR-š[ú] →
 B i' 16' [o o m]i-šir KUR-šú
- 17' *[targumannu?] ittīšu ubilam-ma*
 A ii' 11b–12a ← [(o o) o o o o] | ʿitʿ-ti-šú ú-ʿbiʿ-ʿl[am-ma] →
 B i' 17' [(o) o o o o i]t-ti-šú ú-bi-ʿlam-maʿ
- 18' *[(...) ušann]â dabābšu*
 A ii 12b ← [(o) o o o o o o o] (break)
 B i' 18' [(o) ú-šá-an-na]-ʿaʿ da-ʿbabʿ-šú
- 19' *[umma? Gugg]u* ardu pāliḫka*
 B i' 19' [o o ^mgu-ug-g]u* ARAD pa-ʿliḫʿ-ka
- 20' *[(o) o o o o] utūl-ma*
 B i' 20' [(o) o o o o] ú-ʿtul(“DU₆”)ʿ-*ma*
- 21' *[(o o) šuttu i]naṭṭal*
 B i' 21' [(o o) o o i]-ʿnaʿ-ṭa-al
- 22' *x [o o o m]ātātī?*
 B i' 22' [o o o o m]aʿ-ta-a-te
 G iii' 1' x [o o o o o o o]
- 23' *x [o o o (o) šitk]unat?-ma*
 B i' 23' [o o o (o) šitʿ-k]uʿ-na-at-ma
 G iii' 2' x [o o (o) o o o o o]
- 24' *kan[ūnu? (o o) o]-ḫu-ú*
 B i' 24' [o o o (o o) o]-ʿḫuʿ-ú
 G iii' 3' ka-n[uʿ-nuʿ (o o) o o o]
- 25' *šēr mā[tʿ (o) o-r]iʿ/h]uʿ napiḫ-ma*
 B i' 25' [o o o o o o na-pi-i]ḫ-ma
 C i' 1' [o o o (o) o-r]iʿ/h]uʿ na-pi-iḫ-ma
 G iii' 4' še-er KU[R (o) o o o o o o]
- 26' *ana pāṭ gimrī[ša n]amirtu šaknat*
 B i' 26' [o o o o o o o o o šak-na-a:]t (break)
 C i' 2' [o o o o o o n]a*-ʿmirʿ-tú šak-na-a:t
 G iii' 5' a-na paṭ gim-[ri-šá o o o o o o]
- 27' *Aššur-bān-[ap]li šarru ša*
 C i' 3' [^{m(d)}aš+šur–DÙ–IBI]LA LUGAL šá
 G iii' 6' ^{md}aš+šur–DÙ–[IBILA o o]

28' *kīma nūri namri*

- C i' 4' [o o nu-ú-r]i nam-ri
 D iii' 1' ki-^ˀma nu-ú^ˀ-[ri o o]
 G iii' 7' ki-ma nu-^ˀú^ˀ-[ri o o]

29' *šūpû-ma kūn qerebša*

- C i' 5' [o o o ku-u]n qé-reb-šá
 D iii' 2' šu-pu-ma ku-u[n o o o]
 G iii' 8' šu-pu-ma ku-u[n o o o]

30' *ušannī-ma bēl matāti ilū 'a*

- C i' 6' [o o o o o o] EN KUR.KUR DINGIR-*u-a*
 D iii' 3' ú-šá-an-ni-ma [o o o o o o o]
 G iii' 9' ú-šá-an-ni-ma E[N² o o o o o o]

31' *ina šāt mūši izzizam-ma*

- C i' 7' [o o o o o] ^ˀi^ˀ-zi-za-am-ma
 D iii' 4' ina šat ^ˀmu-š^ˀi^ˀ [o o o o o]
 G iii' 10' ina šat mu-š^ˀi^ˀ [o o o o o]

32' *kīam iqbā*

- C i' 8' [o o o i]q-ba-a
 D iii' 5' ki-a-am i[q-ba-a]
 G iii' 11' ki-a-am [o o o]

33' *umma ša Aššur-bān-apli [šar²] māt²-[Aššu]r^{1,2}*

- C i' 9' [o o o ^maš+šur-D]Û-^ˀIBILA^{2,ˀ} [o] ^ˀKUR^{2,ˀ}-[aš+šur.K]I^{1,2} (*break*)
 D iii' 6' um-ma šá ^maš+šur-D[Û-IBILA o o o o o]
 G iii' 12' um-ma šá ^maš+šur-D[Û-IBILA o o o o o]

34' *ḥiṣiḥti Aššur bēl² g[imri²]*

- D iii' 7' ḥi-š^ˀi-iḥ-te aš+šur ^ˀEN^{2,ˀ} [o o]
 E i' 1' [o o o o o o o E]N² g[im²-ri²]
 G iii' 13' ḥ[i]-^ˀš^ˀi^ˀ-iḥ-te aš+š[ur² o o o]

35' *šēpī bēlūt[š u]aba[t-ma]*

- D iii' 8' GÌR.2 ^ˀbe*-lu*-ti^ˀ ^ˀ-[šú o o o]
 E i' 2' [o o o o o o š]a-ba[t-ma]
 G iii' 14' [o o be-l]u*-t[i^ˀ*-šú o o o]

36' *ana epē[š ard]ūt[išu²]*

- D iii' 9' a-^ˀna e^ˀ*-p[eš o o o] (*end of column*)
 E i' 3' [o o o o o AR]AD²-t[i-šú]
 G iii' 15' [o o e-p]e[š² o o o] (*break*)

37' *[libšā² u]znā[ka²]*

- E i' 4' [(o) o o o u]z²-^ˀna^ˀ-[ka]

- 38' [bēlūssu² pa]lḫiṣ ṣull[ī-ma]
E i' 5' [o o pa]l-^ˈḫi-iš ṣu^ˈ-ul-l[i-ma]
- 39' [o o o-t]e² lillikū supp[ūka]
E i' 6' [o o o-t]e² lil-li-ku su-p[u-^ˈka]
- 40' [kī² ann]ā² tētepšū-m[a]
E i' 7' [o (o) an-n]a²-^ˈa*^ˈ te-tep-šu-m[a]
- 41' [ša] ušabrūka tultalli[mu²]
E i' 8' [o] ^ˈú^ˈ-šab-ru-ka tul(“DU₆”)-ta-^ˈli^ˈ-[^ˈmu²]
- 42' [lā² kanšūt]i² nakirīka
E i' 9' [o kan²-šu²-t]e² na-ki-ri-ka
F i' 1 [o o o o na-ki-ri]-ka
- 43' [šapalk]a² ušakmas-ma
E i' 10' [šá²-pal²-k]a² ^ˈú-šak-ma-as-ma^ˈ
F i' 2 [o o o ú-šak-m]a-as-ma
- 44' [tur]assaba² ina kakki
E i' 11' [tu²-r]a²-sa-ba ina GIŠ.TUKUL
F i' 3 [o o o o in]a GIŠ.TUKUL
- 45' [šutti] aṭṭula aplaḫ-ma
E i' 12' [o o] ^ˈaṭ^ˈ-ṭu-la ap-làḫ-ma
F i' 4 [o o o o o] ap-làḫ-ma
- 46' [qibīt² i]līya ušallima
E i' 13' [o o DI]NGIR-ia ú-šal-li-ma
F i' 5 [o o o o] ^ˈú^ˈ-šal-li-ma
- 47' [(o) uša]nnâ ana šarri
E i' 14' [(o) ú-šá-a]n-na-a a-na LUGAL
F i' 6 [(o) ú-šá-an-n]a-^ˈa*^ˈ a-na LUGAL
- 48' [ultu ūm]i annî
E i' 15'a [o o u₄-m]e an-né-e →
F i' 7 [o o u₄-m]e an-ni-i
- 49' šattišam [l]ā naparkâ
E i' 15'b-16'a ← šat-ti-šam | [o na-pa]r-ka-a →
F i' 8 [o o o l]a na-par-ka-a
- 50' našâku [k]abittu biltu
E i' 16'b ← na-šá-ku (end of column)
F i' 9 [o o o k]a-bit-tú GUN
- 51' [(o o) u an]a šēr nakirīšu
F i' 10 [(o o) o a-n]a* še-er* LÚ.KÚR.MEŠ-šú

- 52' [kayyān?] *anāku lasmāku*
F i' 11 [(o) o o o o] *a-na-ku la-as-ma-k̄:u*
- 53' [tāmarti' uš] *ēbila amḥur*
F i' 12 [o o o ú-š] *e-bi-la am-ḥur*
- 54' [o o amāti' ann] *āti'*
F i' 13 [o o o o o an-n] *a'-a-te*
- 55' [...]-x-šú
F i' 14 [...]-x-šú
- 56' [...] x
F i' 15 [...] x (*break*)

(short lacuna or slight overlap⁵⁴)

- 1'' 'ú'-[...]
H ii' 1' 'ú'-[...]
- 2'' *mār-š[iprīya uma 'er']*
H ii' 2' LÚ.A-K[IN-ia o o o o]
- 3'' *ana amā[r Guggu']*
H ii' 3' *a-na a-ma[r o o o o]*

(*single ruling*)

Notes on the Score Transliteration

Gyges 3: The reading *la'*]-*pa-an*, “before, from”, was first suggested by Cogan & Tadmor (1977, 71). For the use of this preposition in a spatial-distance context in Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions, compare, for example, Frame 2021, 332 Sargon II 74 vi 32: 10 *nindan lapān dūrīšu rabī unessī-ma*, “he moved (it) back a distance of ten *nindanu* from in front of its main wall”. A restoration TA] *pa-an* is unlikely as that word combination is only attested together with *kakkī*, “weapons”, in Neo-Assyrian inscriptions.

Gyges 4: For the tentative restoration *ša' urḥīšu'*, “whose roads”, compare CAD P, 350 s.v. *petû* 2c, with other attestations of *petû*, “to open”, with roads or paths.

Gyges 7: The first (partially-preserved) sign in BM 134454 i' 12' is either ME or a sign ending with a vertical wedge followed by a horizontal wedge (that is, “ME”) and, thus,

54. Context suggests that probably very little is missing between Gyges 56' and 1'', perhaps even a slight overlap of 1–2 lines is conceivable. Note that in BM 134454, the only manuscript to preserve both the beginning and the end of the Gyges episode, the account extends over one complete column and five lines, that is, probably ca. 65–75 lines. Given that the first lacuna (between Gyges 12 and 1') is ca. five lines in length (see fn. 53, above), Gyges 56' should equate to approximately line 73 of the whole Gyges episode, which would point towards a rather short second lacuna (between Gyges 56' and 1''), should it exist.

MAR, GAL, PI, RAD, and ŠI are also possible candidates. Millard (1968, 102) — followed by Cogan & Tadmor (1977, 71), Lanfranchi (1990, 110), Ivantchik (1993, 256), Onasch (1994, vol. 2, 51), and Adalı (2011, 118) — tentatively restored [*da-ad-m*]e, *dadmī*, “settlements”, but this is unlikely as this masculine plural noun does not agree in gender with the following feminine adjective *rap-šá-tu-ma*, “wide”, which could be a singular form (*rapšatū-ma*; see below) or a plural form (*rapšātum-ma*). If the adjective is feminine plural, then one could tentatively suggest that the ME is used here as a plural marker and, thus, one might restore *ummānātu*, “troops”, *nišū*, “people”, or *mātātu*, “lands”, at the beginning of the line. Note, however, that (LÚ.)ERIM.ME, UN.ME, and KUR.ME are not yet presently attested in the extant Ashurbanipal corpus and that one expects (LÚ.)ERIM.ĦI.A, and not (LÚ.)ERIM.ME. Another possibility is [*ni-š*]i, “people”, but this also is not a widely-attested spelling for *nišū* in Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions. Because the passage is likely describing something belonging to Gyges (or part of his kingdom), one probably should expect that noun, whatever it might have been, to have had a possessive suffix attached to it. If this is indeed the case, the partially-preserved sign before *rap-šá-tu-ma* cannot be the ME plural marker since it would have appeared before the third masculine possessive suffix (-*su*, -*šu*, -*šú*). The same goes for [*ni-š*]i. One possible reading of the line might be [*ša o (o)-su/šu/šú ma[?]-g*]al[?] *rap-šá-tu-ma*, “[whose ... is ve]ry extensive”. This tentative proposal is based on Leichty 2011, 176 Esarhaddon 93 (Tarbišu A) line 24: *ša šubassa magal rapšatu*, “whose site is very extensive”.

Gyges 8: Cogan & Tadmor (1977, 71) suggested reading the first (partially-preserved) sign in BM 134454 i' 13' as *l]a[?]*, and, thus, translated *lā šuklulu* as “undeveloped” (1977, 73); this interpretation was followed by Lanfranchi (1990, 110) and Ivantchik (1993, 256). Since only the final vertical wedge of that sign is preserved, it is not yet possible to confirm or reject Cogan and Tadmor’s suggested identification. Note that the only other presently-known attestation of *šuklulu*, “completed”, in the extant Ashurbanipal corpus is preceded by the negative particle *lā*; see Jeffers & Novotny 2022, Ashurbanipal 185 (L³) obv. 2: *ša ultu ulla dūršu lā epšu lā šuklulu šal[hūšu]*, “whose (inner) wall had not been built (and) [whose] o[uter wall] had not been completed since time immemorial”. However, because Gyges is reported to have achieved a major victory over the Cimmerians (see the note to Gyges 12 below), there is no reason to assume that his country or some part of it was “not complete” or “undeveloped”.

Gyges 10: The tentative restoration of the relative pronoun *ša*, “who”, at the beginning of Gyges 11 follows Borger (1996, 181) and Novotny & Jeffers (2018, 50 Ashurbanipal 2 [Prism E₂]). Note that the verbal forms in Gyges 11–12 seem to have the subjunctive ending -*u*.

Gyges 11: One possible restoration for the beginning of this line is [*ik-mu[?]*]-*ú[?]*, “[who cap]tured”. Note that the verb *kamû*, “to capture, defeat”, also occurs in close proximity to *šumqutu*, “to cut down”, in Novotny & Jeffers 2022, Sîn-šarru-iškun 2 line 8'. The verb *kamû* is presently not attested in the extant Ashurbanipal corpus, but it does fit the context of this passage.

Gyges 12: Borger (1996, 181) and Novotny & Jeffers (2018, 50 Ashurbanipal 2 [Prism E₂]) tentatively restore the verb at the end of this line as *ušamqitūšu*, “they cut *him* down”. Millard (1968, 102) and Cogan & Tadmor (1977, 73) have also suggested that this line recorded the Cimmerians defeating the Lydian king in battle. Neither, however, restored the third masculine singular accusative suffix *-šu* on the verb in question, nor did Ivantchik (1993, 256) and Onasch (1994, vol. 2, 51). Because Gyges lived to tell the tale, as it is abundantly clear from all subsequent versions of the narrative (see the “Aššur’s promise” section above),⁵⁵ it is the Lydian king, not the Cimmerians, who should be regarded as the subject of *šumqutu* and the partially-preserved verb in Gyges 11. Thus, Gyges 10–12, could be tentatively translated as “[*who cap*]tured [the Cimme]rians, a dangerous enemy, in battle (and) [who] cut (them) do[wn *with the swor*]d”. If interpreted correctly, then there is no reason to assume that the Lydian king suffered a major defeat at the hands of his enemies before he sent his envoy to Nineveh. Despite this (initial) success of Gyges on the battlefield, the Cimmerians remained a dangerous threat and, thus, the Lydian king sent his envoy to Nineveh in the hopes that the establishment of diplomatic ties with Ashurbanipal would lead to Assyrian military aid, thereby ensuring the survival of his country. For further information on the Cimmerians, see, for example, Lanfranchi 1990 (especially pp. 109–123), Ivantchik 1993 (pp. 95–105 in particular), and Adalı 2011 (especially pp. 117–119 and 121–123). For a short overview of the proposed scholarly locations for the Cimmerian homeland, see Bagg 2020, 231 *s.v.* Gimir.

Gyges 18’: The restoration of *ušannâ*, “he reported to me”, follows Borger (1996, 182). At the beginning of the line, one might restore the relative pronoun *ša*, as suggested by Novotny (2005, 360), which might resolve the issue of the sudden change in grammatical subject from Gyges to his messenger.

Gyges 20’: As suggested by Zgoll (2006, 315), the beginning of the line might be restored as *ina šāt mūši*, “during the course of a night”. Compare also the very similar wording in Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 242 Ashurbanipal 11 (Prism A) iii 118–120: *ina ūmīšu ištēn eḫlu ina šāt mūši utūl-ma inaṭṭal šuttu*, “at that time, one young man laid down during the night and saw a dream”.

Gyges 23’: The first preserved sign in A 7920+ i’ 23’ ends with in a vertical wedge and, therefore, it cannot be SAG (as proposed in Borger 1996, 182; Novotny 2005, 359; and Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 41 Ashurbanipal 1 [Prism E₁]). Thus, [*šit*²-*k*]u²-*na-at-ma*, “[*was es*]tablised, but”, is a more plausible reading. There are traces of a sign in BM 128308 iii’ 2’, which might be very tentatively read as *e*²’-[*tu-tu*] (*eḫtu*, “darkness”), thus creating an antithetical description to the following passage (Gyges 24’–29’), which refers to Ashurbanipal as a luminous beacon of light. Alternatively, one could read the beginning of the line as *e*²’-[*ši-tu*], “confusion”; compare Frame 2021, 294 Sargon II 65 line 248: *eli Uraṛṭi ana pāt gimrišu šitkumat eštu*, “confusion was established over the land Uraṛtu,

55. Gyges’ death, which took place long after the composition of the E Prisms, is first recorded in Prism A (Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 237f. Ashurbanipal 11 [Prism A] ii 111–118), a text composed in either 644, 643, or 642 BC. On the date of the eponymy of Šamaš-da’-inanni, see Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 32f.

to its full extent”.

Gyges 24’: The horizontal wedge of the sign after KA in BM 128306 iii’ 3’ is rather long. As far as the fragment is presently preserved, there are no traces of any other wedges than this horizontal one, apart from possibly very faint traces below it. Therefore, there are few options on how to read the sign. AŠ, NU, and BAD are likely candidates. Because the passage refers to a brightly-burning object, we tentatively propose *ka-n[u²-nu²]*, “brazier”, the Assyrian form of *kinūnu*, which is attested in inscriptions of Sargon II; see Frame 2021, 302 Sargon II 65 lines 365 and 380. In other inscriptions of Ashurbanipal, *kanūnu* is written logographically as K1.NE (Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 266 Ashurbanipal 12 [Prism H] i 8’). Note that Cogan & Tadmor (1977, 22), (tentatively) followed by Lanfranchi (1990, 110) and Ivantchik (1993, 96, 256), suggested that Gyges 23’–34’ should be restored as *k[īma tibūt eribē] | ka[tim Luddi kalīša]*, “(they) co[vered the land Lydia, all of it], l[ike a swarm of locusts],” on the basis of their interpretation of Gyges 10–12 (see the note to Gyges 12, above) and a passage recording the Elamites invading Babylonia (Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 66 Ashurbanipal 3 [Prism B] iv 41–42). This proposal is not supported by the interpretation of the Gyges narrative forwarded in this article.

Gyges 25’: The KUR sign could be read as *šadû*, “mountain”, rather than as *mātu*, “land”. This reading, however, seems less likely because of the feminine pronominal suffix used in Gyges 29’.

Gyges 30’: The last preserved sign in BM 128306 iii’ 9’ is definitely not AN, as it has only one horizontal wedge before the (first) vertical wedge. Therefore, it is unlikely that a divine name preceded the title *bēl mātāti*, “lord of (all of) the lands”. This interpretation would be further supported should A 8130 and BM 121018 belong to one and the same prism (see fn. 53, above), since there would be insufficient space to restore the name of the god Aššur between the words *ušannī-ma*, “he then reported”, and *bēl mātāti*, “lord of (all of) the lands”.

Gyges 35’–36’: The readings *‘be-lu-ti’-[šú]*, “[his] lordly majesty”, and *‘e’-p[eš]*, “on doi[ng]”, were confirmed from collation of the original. On the basis of the parallel in LET r.23 (Jeffers & Novotny 2022, Ashurbanipal 207 [LET]), Cogan & Tadmor (1977, 71), followed by Ivantchik (1993, 256) and Onasch (1994, vol. 2, 52), had already suggested these readings, albeit with different signs.

Gyges 37’: The conjectural restoration of *libšâ*, “may they be set”, is based on the frequent co-occurrence of that verb with *uznu*, “ear”, in Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions, although it is not otherwise attested in the extant Ashurbanipal corpus. Compare, for example, Leichty 2011, 156 Esarhaddon 77 (Kalhu A) line 47 (*ina uznīya ibšī-ma*); Novotny & Grayson 2012, 37 Sennacherib 1 (First Campaign Cylinder) lines 69 (*uzuššu ul ibšī-ma*) and 70 (*ina uznīya ibšī-ma*); and Frame 2021, 281 Sargon II 65 line 40 (*ina uznīšunu ibšī-ma*). The form *libšâ* (written *lib-šâ-a*) is attested once in an inscription of Esarhaddon (Leichty 2011, 83 Esarhaddon 33 [Letter to God] Tablet II ii 33) and once in an inscription of Ashurbanipal (Jeffers & Novotny 2022, Ashurbanipal 212 r.7’).

Gyges 38': The restoration of *palḫiṣ*, “reverently”, and *bēlūssu*, “his lordly majesty”, are based on LET r.23 (Jeffers & Novotny 2022, Ashurbanipal 207 [LET]): *šarrūssu pitluḫma šullā bēlūssu*, “revere his royal majesty and beseech his lordly majesty”. Borger (1996, 182) and Novotny & Jeffers (2018, 51 Ashurbanipal 2 [Prism E₂]) tentatively read *ar²]-ḫi-iṣ*, “quickly”, instead of *pa]l-ḫi-iṣ*.

Gyges 39': For the restoration of *suppûka*, “your supplications”, with the possessive suffix *-ka*, compare the parallel passage in LET r.24 (Jeffers & Novotny 2022, Ashurbanipal 207 [LET]): *lillikūš suppûka*, “let your supplications go forth to him”. The KA was probably written between cols. i' and ii' of BM 127923+.

Gyges 40'–41': Context suggests that these two lines are part of a conditional clause. Because the verbs *tēteṣṣû-m[a]* and *tultalli[mu²]* have a subjunctive ending (*u*), the clause probably began with *kī* (in its conditional usage), rather than with *šumma*. With regard to *tultalli[mu²]*, compare *ušallima* in Gyges 46'.

Gyges 42': The proposed restoration *lā kanšûti*, “the insubmissive (ones)”, is conjectural.

Gyges 43': The restoration of *šapalka*, “below you”, follows Borger 1996, 183.

Gyges 44': The reading *[tur]assaba*, “[you can st]rike (them) down”, follows Cogan & Tadmor 1977, 72; Lanfranchi (1990, 110); Ivantchik 1993, 257; Onasch 1994, vol. 2, 52; and Borger 1996, 183. Based on context, it seems more likely that the verbal form is second person, rather than first person, and, thus, Gyges, not the god Aššur, is probably the subject of the verb.

Gyges 46': *qibût*, “command of”, is one of two proposed restorations suggested by Cogan & Tadmor (1977, 72). The other was *paraš*, “ordinance of”, which does not semantically fit this context.

Gyges 51': Contrary to Borger (1996, 183), collation suggests that the first sign preserved in BM 127940+ i' 10 can be read as NA.

Gyges 52': The conjectural restoration of *kayyān²*, “constantly”, follows the suggestion of Cogan & Tadmor (1977, 72).

Gyges 54': Borger (1996, 183) was hesitant to read the first sign preserved in BM 127940+ i' 13 as NA, as suggested by Campbell Thompson (1940, 103). In fact, what should be the upper oblique wedge is written almost like a horizontal wedge. This, however, is also the case with other instances of the NA sign on this fragment. The restoration proposed here is based on similar passages in Ashurbanipal's inscriptions. For example, compare Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 73 Ashurbanipal 3 (Prism B) vii 25–26: *šūt amâti annâti mār-šiprīya uma''er šēr Ummanigaš*, “I dispatched my messenger to Ummanigaš regarding these matters”.

Gyges 2''–3'': For the restoration of these lines, compare, for example, Novotny & Jeffers 2018, 124 Ashurbanipal 6 (Prism C) v 57–58: *ana amār šar Elamti mār-šiprīya uma''er [ḫ]anṭiṣ*, “I dispatc[hed] my messenger to see the king of Elam”. Overall, it seems that Ashurbanipal did very little to support Gyges in his conflict with the Cimmerians; see the discussion in Fuchs 2010, 413f. But at least, assuming the restoration proposed in this article is correct, Ashurbanipal did send a messenger in response to Gyges' initial contact

(pace Fuchs 2010, 420). If true, then that journey would have been rather remarkable since Sardis, as the crow flies, is 1360 kilometers from Nineveh; Gyges's capital was 660 kilometers west of the westernmost Assyrian provincial capital Que (mod. Adana), which itself was 700 kilometers from Nineveh. Given the vast distance between the western border of the Assyrian Empire and Lydia, it is not at all surprising that Ashurbanipal did little to nothing to aid Gyges. Lydia's extremely remote location, from the Assyrian perspective, would have been abundantly clear when Ashurbanipal's envoy traveled to the Lydian capital with Gyges' messenger and interpreter.

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