

THE BARTON CYLINDER: A LAMENT FOR KEŠ?

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1. *Introduction*

More than two decades have elapsed since Alster and Westenholz published their edition of the text of the so-called Barton cylinder, the latest edition until now.² The main points of their publication are summarized here:

- The cylinder was found in the proximity of what was presumably Ninurta's temple Ešumeša in Nippur;
- The epigraphic features 'suggest a date toward the end of the Early Dynastic period, or perhaps Early Sargonic Times';
- Because of certain peculiarities of some signs – e.g., K A , B I – the authors supposed that the text was written by a scribe from Adab;
- The mention of among others the gods Ninḫursaġa and Ešpeš however suggested to the authors that the cylinder text was written in Keš.

Alster and Westenholz ended their introduction by expressing the hope that their edition might lead 'to further discussion and a better understanding of this difficult text'. It is this challenge which I would like to accept in honour of both authors who made this possible. The starting points were the photographs of the cylinder,³ and the cuneiform copies made by Westenholz, which were always compared with those made by Barton.⁴ In a few cases Barton was able to copy more signs because the still unbaked cylinder had deteriorated less at that time. If the signs copied by Barton and Westenholz did not correspond with each other, the preference was generally given to the copy of Westenholz.

2. *Synopsis*

The text of the Barton cylinder may be summarized as follows. Once, in *primaeval* times under stormy conditions in Nippur, an-heaven and ki-earth were paying court to each other (col. I). Thereafter someone, most likely the god of heaven – An –, had intercourse with Ninḫursaġa, as a result of which the Anunna were born (col. II 1-10).⁵ The earth – ki – then

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² Alster and Westenholz 1994.

³ CDLI no. P222183.

⁴ Barton 1918.

⁵ Lisman 2013, § 2.1.3a (pp. 30-31), § 4.2.1.3 (pp. 168-170).

speaks with a *muš-ĝir₂*-snake, perhaps representing the god Irĥan, about the water supply (col. II 13-16). The next episode spins out the history of how a huge image of a god, maybe of Ninurta, was made and decorated (col. III 1 - IV 2).⁶ Then, without any introduction, follows the statement that food and beer had become unhealthy from Nippur to Zabala to Eridu (col. IV 3-16), and that these foodstuffs were not replaced. Next someone – possibly Ninĥursaĝa – speaks to Enlil and accuses someone else, whose name has not been preserved, of having distributed brackish water which is the cause of the lack of food (col. V - VI 4). Suddenly Ninurta, dressed in lions' hides, appears (col. VI 5-15). He⁷ is speaking about a certain but unnamed 'loyal beloved young man' who tries to prevent the temple officials, Ninĥursaĝa, and animals consuming the bad drinks (beer, water) and food (col. VII 3-15). Next Ninurta starts paying attention to sick animals and other needs, especially the water (col. VIII 11-13). Ninĥursaĝa assists him by activating favourable winds (col. IX 7-11; X 9-10).

After a relatively large break in the text (col. XI is completely lost), Ninĥursaĝa's departure from Keš is mentioned (XII 3-4).⁸ At the time Ninurta had appeared, Irĥan – the deified waterway⁹ – was also acting in a beneficial way (col. XII 7 - XIII 5), which may mean that the rivers supply usable water again. Enlil's authority was restored. The return to normal life and even to prosperity(?) is described (col. XIII 6 - XIV 14). The (wild) animals, originally belonging to Niĥursaĝa,¹⁰ again multiplied. At that time there was a song sung about the return of Ninĥursaĝa to Keš (col. XV 4-5). A temple official, Dabala, understood this only when he saw that sacrifices were made, and that the shortage of food and water had come to an end (col. XV 6-11). The usual rites were introduced again, such as the libation of beer (col. XVI). Then presumably Ninĥursaĝa is speaking (perhaps from line XVI 14 - XVII 7?), because the text refers to 'the pure sceptre of *my brother Enlil*' (col. XVII 3-4); she mentions that Irĥan has re-established the waterways. Next Ninĥursaĝa surveys the situation in and around Keš (col. XVII 11-12), but the result appears to be very disappointing: nobody seems to be present any more (col. XVII 13), and her temple had fallen into disrepair (col. XVIII 3). Complaints followed (col. XVIII 4-5). After a gap in the text – perhaps Ninĥursaĝa is speaking (col. XVIII 9 'my son') – it appears that Ešpeš, a minor god, closed the city gates (col. XIX 2-5) and Ninĥursaĝa left the city (col. XIX 6). The complaint ends with the question when (presumably also with undertones of 'why') those happy times had come to an end (col. XX 1-6). The wish for a prosperous future is expressed (col. XX 7-8). The text ends with the start of the building of a new temple complex, probably in the neighbourhood of the old city of Keš (col. XX 9-13).

3. Interpretation of the cylinder text: an attempt

The text of the Barton cylinder is unique. Until now no duplicate of it has been found: the only similar text is one found in Abū Šalābiḥ (IAS 174). Of this text, written in the so-called UD.GAL.NUN orthography and about 200 years older than the text of the Barton cylinder,

⁶ This episode may be a dream, like e.g. the description of Niĥirsu in Gudea's dream (Cyl. A. IV 14-19).

⁷ That Ninurta is speaking may be concluded from col. VII 9: 'my mother'.

⁸ Ninĥursaĝa's name is not in the extant text, but can be inferred from the development of the story.

⁹ Wiggermann 1998-2001.

¹⁰ Jacobsen 1973, 282.

only about 14 lines are preserved;¹¹ in it, the name of the goddess is Ningal instead of Ninḫursaġa. These lines only concern the cosmogonic introduction, and as such they are no proof that this UD.GAL.NUN text should be a duplicate of the Barton text since cosmogonic introductions may belong to different kinds of texts.

One difficulty in understanding the text of the Barton cylinder is the loss of at least seven lines at the end of every column and of one complete column (XI). Nevertheless I will try 1) to put the text in a historical context, and 2) to relate this text to some other myths and literary texts. Two questions need to be answered:

- Who are the protagonists of this text?
- Is it possible to describe in broad outline the historical background of this myth?

3.1 The divine protagonists

The sexual union, described in col. II, of – presumably – An and Ninḫursaġa created ‘the seven’. Arguments were put forward to identify these seven with the Anunna.¹²

Enlil, Inanna of Zabala, and Enki are the gods who were deprived of food and beer. Enlil is also the god to whom the complaint about the disaster is addressed. It seems as if Enlil had lost his authority, but this could be restored after a while.

The next god who is mentioned is Ninurta, dressed in lions’ hides.¹³ Due to the many broken lines in the columns VII-IX we can only catch a glimpse of Ninurta’s actions: he was responsible for putting an end to the disastrous situation. It is most likely Ninurta who is speaking in lines VII 3-15, because of the expression *am a-ġu₁₀* ‘my mother’, which may refer to Ninḫursaġa, Ninurta’s mother. Cooper has already described the two aspects of Ninurta: he is a god of agricultural and animal fertility and he is a warrior who defends Enlil and Sumer.¹⁴ According to Streck, the first aspect of Ninurta – a god of agriculture and fertility – may be derived from the supposed meaning of the name Ninurta, ‘Herr der Erde’,¹⁵ or ‘Lord of the Earth’. The ePSD shows several transcriptions for IB, including *uraš* ‘earth’ and *urta* ‘ear of barley’. In the literature the transcription IB = *urta* is only found in the name of Ninurta.¹⁶ The oldest form of the sign IB (ZATU no. 260) may indeed represent an ear of some cereal. In my opinion the translation proposed by Streck – ‘Herr der Erde’ – may be not quite correct. The name Ninurta rather means ‘Lord of the cereals’, which befits a vegetation god. This aspect finally grew into a broader one and Ninurta became a god of agriculture and fertility.¹⁷ The second aspect that Cooper mentioned, that of a warrior, may have developed from the first one. The mytheme of Ninurta who appears to solve problems when normal living conditions are threatened is a well-known one, and the example mentioned in the Barton cylinder may be one of the oldest ones: the threats to daily life caused by

¹¹ Lisman 2013, § 2.1.3b, 31-36; 241-242.

¹² Lisman 2013, § 4.2.1.3, 168-170.

¹³ Wiggermann 1992, 160: ‘(...) the lion is the proper symbolic animal of Ningirsu (...)’.

¹⁴ Cooper 1978, 10-11.

¹⁵ Streck 1998-2001, 515b.

¹⁶ Two exceptions were found. In CDLI nos. P217273 (= Gelb, MAD 1, 221), obv. 8, and P217275 (= Gelb, MAD 1, 255), obv. III 11’, §u IB (so by Gelb) was transcribed as §u-urta. Gelb’s transcription is more correct in my opinion.

¹⁷ In the Old Babylonian text *A balbale of Ninurta, God of Fertility* the connection of Ninurta with the fertility of flora and fauna is emphasized (Al-Rawi and Black 2000).

an unknown individual. Finally, thanks to Ninurta's intervention, the prosperity of nature returns in Keš. Euphrates and Tigris regain their course; Enlil's power (= 'the pure sceptre of Enlil') is re-established (col. XIII 3-5). Another famous example of Ninurta active in a rescue operation, in a text of later date than that of the Barton cylinder, is given in the text *Lugal-e*.¹⁸ It describes how Ninurta fights Asag, a demon that threatens Sumer;¹⁹ even the gods fear its strength. In the lines 334-346 of *Lugal-e* the lack of sweet water and the presence of famine is mentioned, but only after the defeat of Asag. Ninurta's actions consist of making a pile of stones in the mountain and in providing the water supply for Sumer, resulting in the return of the prosperity to Sumer (*Lugal-e*: 362-364).

After her activities in producing 'the seven', presumably the Anunna, Ninḫursaĝa is mentioned by name again only in column IX. There we meet the goddess in connection with determining the fate of several winds, probably in order to support Ninurta. The relation between Ninḫursaĝa and the winds does not appear to be known from any other text. Subsequently it is mentioned that Ninḫursaĝa leaves Keš; this means that at that moment Ninḫursaĝa is the city goddess of Keš. After the end of the disasters Ninḫursaĝa returns to Keš. Shortly thereafter she took up a position on an outer corner of the city walls of Keš: her temple had become derelict and she saw nobody down below her.

The goddess of Keš is named ^dtud in the archaic version of the Keš temple hymn;²⁰ in its Old Babylonian version her name is Nintu or Ninḫursaĝa. Jacobsen described the eventual syncretism of several mother goddesses.²¹ First the difference between Nintur (^dnin-tur₃), the goddess of the cow-pen, and Nintu (^dtud or ^dnin-tud), the birth goddess, disappeared. Originally Nintu and Ninḫursaĝa were different goddesses: Nintu was responsible for the domestic animals, and Ninḫursaĝa for the wild animals. But finally both goddesses were syncretized to become one mother goddess. The goddess of Keš is mentioned by the name Nintu in an Abū Šalābiḫ za₃-mi₃ hymn.²² The collection of these hymns does not contain the name of Ninḫursaĝa. The archaic version of the Keš temple hymn may have initiated the name Ninḫursaĝa; in line II 4'-5' we read: ḫursaĝ (PA.DUN₃) ki-duĝ₃ / u₆ tum₃-ma 'mountain, good place, / which compelled admiration'.²³ In the Temple Hymns no. 7 and no. 29 there is a syncretism of Aruru, Nintu, and Ninḫursaĝa. Another syncretism took place in *Lugal-e*, where Ninmaḫ, the mother goddess and Ninurta's mother, was named by Ninurta 'Lady of the mountain range', i.e. Ninḫursaĝa. If my hypothesis is correct that IAS 174 is part of a forerunner of the Barton cylinder, then Ningal is another name for the mother goddess. This may be confirmed by the Abū Šalābiḫ za₃-mi₃ hymn (lines 39-40): ki-nisig nun-tud-tud / ama ^dnin-gal za₃-mi₃ 'In the greenery, engendering princes, / said mother Ningal praise'. Thus we may conclude that during the Early Dynastic-period or shortly thereafter, the syncretism of these goddesses took place. An Old Babylonian example of this syncretism is the text *A tigi to Nintur*, in which the name Ninḫursaĝa is not mentioned explicitly, but is only hinted at: ama

¹⁸ Van Dijk 1983; *Ninurta's exploits: a šir-sud (?) to Ninurta*, ETCSL 1.6.2. *Lugal-e* is probably composed in the Ur III period.

¹⁹ Foster (2000) tried – in a very convincing way – to relate the story of Asag and its stone allies to volcanic activities in the north of Mesopotamia.

²⁰ Biggs 1971, line D ii (~ OB I. 78, p. 202); line D r. ii (~ OB I. 129, p. 203).

²¹ Jacobsen 1973.

²² Biggs 1974, 48, lines 75-77. In this hymn is Keš associated with doves, while in the text of the Barton cylinder Ninḫursaĝa receives birds as offerings.

²³ Biggs 1971, 196, fig. 1.

^dnin-tud nin ^da-ru-ru-e₂-keš₃^{ki}-a ħur-saĝ ki-sikil-la u₃-tud-da ‘Mother Nintu, Lady Aruru of the House Keš, born in the mountains, the pure place’.²⁴

The association of Ninĥursaĝa with wild animals and birds is described in the Keš temple hymn.²⁵ The Temple Hymns also make clear that there are temples for Niĥursaĝa in more than one place: in Keš (no. 7), in Adab (no. 29) and in ĤI-ZA (no. 39; this town can not yet be identified). If the order of the temples in the Temple Hymns is indicative of the importance of the temples the praises of which were sung, then Ninĥursaĝa’s temple in Adab may be less important than that of Keš. This may be confirmed by the observation that Ninĥursaĝa’s name is hardly attested in the texts from Adab.²⁶

The most recent article about the god Irĥan was written by Wiggermann.²⁷ His name, written sometimes with the logogram MUŠ and therefore perhaps to be paraphrased ‘deified ophidian stream’, is seldom present in third millennium texts. Irĥan seems to be associated with the Euphrates and the Tigris, but this connection is only based on the text of the Barton cylinder. In this text he was given the epithets lu₂-sa₆-ga ‘the beautiful man’ (XII 8) and lu₂-diĝir (XVII 5). We cannot be sure whether the latter epithet was intended for Irĥan, because there is a gap between it and his name in col. XVI 14. One can only speculate if the muš-ĝir₂-snake (col. II 11), ^did₂-maĥ (col. II 13) and diĝir-id₂-da (col. II 15) also refer to Irĥan.²⁸

The name Enkidu is mentioned in col. X 11. Until now the text of the Barton cylinder is the only Old Sumerian text in which we can read this name. He does not seem to be present in the god lists from Fara and Abū Šalābiḥ, or if he is, it must be in a damaged part. In later times we find his name as Enkimdu, a farmer and a man of the dykes and canals.²⁹

With respect to Ešpeš, who closed the city gates of – most likely – Keš (col. XIX 4-5), the relevant information given by both Alster and Westenholz and by Such-Gutiérrez is that Ešpeš is at home in the area of Keš and Adab.³⁰ The scanty information about this god may indicate that he is relatively unimportant.

3.2 Keš and its temple

The text of this cylinder is in some respects quite specific; it describes the spread of brackish water and, as a consequence thereof, the shortage of food and drink. This period apparently lasted so long that the city of Keš and its temple finally became derelict. These elements suggest that at least some historical facts are described. It is difficult or even impossible to connect these events with particular year dates. But it seems not too far-fetched to place these events in the near past of the time that this text was written. In the following

²⁴ Wilcke 1976, 235, the lines 4-5.

²⁵ Lines 47-50 mention: alim, lu-lim, šeg₉-bar (gun₃-a), tarah₇-maš (sig₇-ga), muš-gu₇^{mušen}, u₅^{mušen} (Gragg 1969, 169-170).

²⁶ Such-Gutiérrez 2005/2006, 26 ad no. 94: ^dNin-ħur-sag.

²⁷ Wiggermann 1998-2001.

²⁸ The possible duplicate text IAS 174 is not helpful in this respect; in col. II 5’ only ušum ‘a snake’ is mentioned. ^did₂ can represent various (deified) rivers (Woods 2005, 32).

²⁹ *The Death of Ur-Namma* (CDLI P469688; Q000386), lines 25 and A15; Civil 1976, 89, lines 93 and 141 of *The Song of the Ploughing Oxen*; Sefati 1998, 324-343, *The Shepherd and the Farmer; Suitor’s Rivalry* (= *Dumuzid and Enkimdu*, ETCSL 4.08.33), the lines 41 and 81-83; in these last lines it is said: ‘Farmer, you are going to be counted as my friend; farmer Enkimdu, you are going to be counted as my friend, farmer, as my friend’.

³⁰ Alster and Westenholz 1994, 37 ad XIX 2; Such-Gutiérrez 2005-2006, 16 ad 38. ^dEš₅-peš.

paragraphs I will try to situate the text of the Barton cylinder in a historical framework. Archaeological data with respect to Keš have been lacking until now, but a general view of the era before the Akkad period may be helpful. Thereafter what is known about Keš based upon textual evidence will be summarized.³¹

3.2.1 The spread of brackish water may hold the clue to a possible interpretation of the cylinder's text. Brackish water results in salinization of the soil and may be caused by the flow of water with a high salt concentration, or by an increased evaporation of water. In this respect it is interesting to read what Crawford mentioned about 'layers of silt' found in Mesopotamia.³² Silt layers of different thickness were found at a number of sites, but they are not all of the same date. Most layers date from before the Early Dynastic III period. The site of Eridu, however, appeared to be an exception since no silt layer could be detected there. The tentative conclusion may be that the text of the cylinder refers to a period during which at least the region of Keš was struck by a flood. This period may have lasted several years, because when Ninḫursaġa finally returned nobody was present anymore (col. XVII); her temple had fallen into disrepair (col. XVIII) and Ešpeš closed the city gates (col. XIX). These are indications that Keš at a certain point was abandoned. Such a disaster most likely only occurs after a prolonged period of misfortune.

3.2.2 With respect to the textual evidence, the Keš Temple Hymn is the oldest text about the Keš temple,³³ which passed down nearly unaltered from the Early Dynastic time up to and including the Old Babylonian period.³⁴ Its tradition may be an indication of the importance of Ninḫursaġa and her sanctuary in Keš. The only 'physical' data that might be inferred from this hymn is either the eye-catching height of the temple or, otherwise interpreted, the high position in the landscape of this temple, or perhaps both.³⁵

3.2.3 In the Collection of the Sumerian Temple Hymns, which perhaps originate from the Old Akkadian period (at least partially), there are three hymns concerning temples of Ninḫursaġa: one in Keš, one in Adab, and one in the town HI.ZA. The first one³⁶ might give some indication of its situation. The Keš temple 'is built in a terrifying place' (l. 89), which may be interpreted as an isolated and perhaps a high place; the exterior is tall (l. 90), another indication for an eye-catching high building.

³¹ See also Edzard 1976-1980.

³² Crawford 2015, 22-24.

³³ Biggs 1971.

³⁴ Gragg 1969.

³⁵ Gragg 1969, 167: 14. e₂-keš₃^{ki} (...) 15: ḫur-saġ-da mu₂-a an-da gu₂-la₂-a 14. 'Temple of Keš (...)', 15. 'grown up like a mountain, embracing the sky'; 169 lines 31-34: e₂ ... an-ne₂ us₂-sa 'temple ... leaning on the sky'.

³⁶ TH no. 7, lines 89-90 (the transcription is copied from ETCSL 4.80.1): 89. e₂-^dnin-ḫur-saġ-ġa₂ ki-sumur-ra du₃-a 90. keš₃^{ki}-aratta^{ki} šag₄-zu šaġ₄-sig bar-zu al-il₂ '89. House of Ninḫursaġa, built in a terrifying place; 90. respected Keš, your interior is a deep interior, your exterior is tall'. Asher-Greve and Westenholtz (2013, 61) write that in this hymn Nintu and Ninḫursaġa are not syncretized, but that Aruru is used synonymously with Ninḫursaġa. In my opinion, this conclusion is not evident from the text: Ninḫursaġa is syncretized with both Nintu and Aruru. Also in TH no. 29 there is no reason to doubt that Nintu and Ninḫursaġa are not syncretized.

In the Early Dynastic III period E'iginimpa'e built a temple, the Emaḥ, for Ninḥursaḡa in Adab.³⁷ It is very likely that Temple Hymn no. 29 is devoted to this temple.³⁸ My tentative interpretation of this text is as follows. Apart from Ninḥursaḡa's temple there is also a temple of Aṣgi, the city god of Adab, called the Emegalla 'House of the great me', which is situated at a canal. In the AṢ za₃-mi₃ hymns Aṣgi is mentioned in connection with Adab, while in these hymns the mother goddess does not seem to have any relation with Adab, but only with Keš.³⁹

The pantheons of Keš and Adab seem to be closely tied up with each other. Moran reported that the cults of both towns were interwoven, and that the clergy of Keš had their counterparts in Adab.⁴⁰ In his study of Adab's pantheon, Such-Gutiérrez concluded that the mother goddess Ninḥursaḡa is hardly mentioned under that name,⁴¹ in contrast with her other name diḡir-maḥ. Wilson gives a historical survey of the names of Ninḥursaḡa's temple in Adab;⁴² up to and including the Early Dynastic III period and the reign of Lugaldalu this temple was named Esar. The temple built thereafter by E'iginimpa'e was named Emaḥ, and this name was kept from then on. Old Akkadian tablets from Adab 'mention the dispensing of sheep, kids, emmer, and bread to the Emaḥ and personnel associated with the cult of Ninḥursag in the city of Kesh.'⁴³ Evidence of a close relationship between Keš and Adab may also be given by a sale document on a pre-Sargonic clay tablet from Adab, in which E'iginimpa'e – the governor of Adab – bought a field belonging to or having belonged to Billalla, the temple administrator of Keš.⁴⁴

3.2.4 Another observation, made by Gragg,⁴⁵ was that '(f)rom the lack of attestation in the economic documents we must assume that Kēš, at least from the end of Early Dynastic on down, was not a major urban center.' But Ninḥursaḡa's shrine in Keš still existed in the time of Hammurapi. Now to be discussed is the place called Irisaḡrig.⁴⁶ From *kirugu 6* of the *Eridu Lament*, written in the Old Babylonian period, it can be inferred that Aruru / Ninḥursaḡa was goddess of the city of Irisaḡrig and that her sanctuary was named Keš.⁴⁷ The name Irisaḡrig

³⁷ E.g. Frayne 2008, RIME 1.1.7.2.

³⁸ Sjöberg and Bergmann 1969.

³⁹ Biggs 1974, 48, lines 72-74. I am preparing a new edition of the za₃-mi₃ hymns.

⁴⁰ Moran 1976, 338.

⁴¹ Such-Gutiérrez 2005-2006, pp. 10-11 ad 30. Dingir-maḥ, and p. 26 ad 92. ^dNin-ḥur-sag.

⁴² Wilson 2012, 100.

⁴³ Wilson 2012, 101.

⁴⁴ Gelb *et al.* 1991, 99-103 described the content of this tablet comprehensively. The authors write that for the explanation of this text several scenarios are possible.

⁴⁵ Gragg 1969, 164a.

⁴⁶ Irisaḡrig is found in the literature as uru/iri-saḡ/sa₁₂-rig₇. For a possible location of Irisaḡrig: Molina 2013 (especially fig. 2 p. 69); see also Steinkeller 2001, 73-74.

⁴⁷ Wilcke 1972, 55. The lines concerned are (Green 1978, 138):

9	^d ra ¹ -[ru]-ru nin ₉ - ^d mu-ul-lil ₂ -la ₂ -ke	Aruru, Enlil's sister,
10	iri-ni iri-saḡ-rig ₇ zag ḥe ₂ -bi ₂ -in-tag	destroyed her city of Irisaḡrig.
11	keš ₃ ^[ki] ki-ulutim ₂ -kalam-ma-ke ₄	In Keš, the creation place of the Land,
12	itima-kug ud nu-zu-ba uḡ ₃ -e igi ḥe ₂ -ni-in-bar	the people looked inside its holy shrine where daylight is unknown.
13	zag ḥe ₂ -bi ₂ -in-tag šu li-bi ₂ -in-dag	She destroyed it, (but) she did not abandon it.

is already present in Early Dynastic administrative texts. In one text there is a delivery of goods for the lu_2 -iri-saĝ-rig₇, for the lu_2 -adab^{ki} and for the lu_2 -umma^{ki}.⁴⁸ This may also point to a close relation between those places. In a recent study Owen mentioned some texts from Irisaĝrig, which indicate that the city of Irisaĝrig presumably was situated in the vicinity of Keš.⁴⁹ All these texts are administrative. From the Early Dynastic period there are seven texts mentioning Irisaĝrig, and 38 texts have the name Keš. In the Old Akkadian period Ninĥursaĝa of Keš was mentioned on the Bassetki statue of Naram-Suen.⁵⁰ In Ur III texts we find Irisaĝrig far more than the name Keš.⁵¹

3.2.5 A summary of some relevant data with respect to Keš:

- *Jemdet Nasr period* The oldest designations of the city of Keš are found in some seal impressions from the Jemdet Nasr period.⁵² As all these impressions on the seals are representations of cities, the name Keš pointed clearly to a city in this period.
- *Early Dynastic period* In this period the name Irisaĝrig appears for the first time,⁵³ though rather infrequently. Irisaĝrig is the name of the city, while the name Keš from now on seemed to be reserved for the sanctuary there.⁵⁴ The mother goddess – Aruru, Nintu, Ninĥursaĝa – is always the goddess of Keš, being a city or a temple. There was a $lugal$ -keš₃ present in Early Dynastic and also in Old Akkadian administrative texts. From the context it may be concluded that it concerns a personal name: it did not designate a ‘king of Keš’.⁵⁵ A ruler of Keš is not known. In this respect Keš resembles Nippur and Eridu. Apparently the cities with the highest gods – Nippur and Enlil; Eridu and Enki; Keš and Ninĥursaĝa – share this same peculiarity.⁵⁶
- *Old Akkadian period* This may be the time in which the Collection of Temple Hymns was made. The temple of Keš had a prominent place, assuming that the order in which the hymns are presented reflects the importance of the deity in question. Irisaĝrig is not mentioned in this collection.
- *Ur III period* The name Irisaĝrig is present in far more administrative texts than in those of the Early Dynastic period. Ninĥursaĝa’s temple is still situated in Keš, or may we say that Keš is equivalent to the temple’s name?

⁴⁸ Martin *et al.* 2001, 59 no. 78.

⁴⁹ Owen 2013, 36, 77. In some texts the goddess Ninĥursaĝa was specified as ‘Ninĥursaĝa of Keš’ (e.g. text no. 433, surface b 2), in other texts as ‘Ninĥursaĝa of Irisaĝrig’ (e.g. text no. 290 obv. II 18).

⁵⁰ Frayne 1993, RIME 2.1.4.10, col. II 10-11.

⁵¹ Irisaĝrig 166x; Keš 8x (date: March 2016).

⁵² Legrain 1936, nos. 400, 401.

⁵³ The name Irisaĝrig ‘The city, a gift’ seems to be a ‘new’ name, formulated in an analogous way as that of Eridu ‘The good city’, of which the other representation is NUN^{ki}.

⁵⁴ Foxvog (1980) published the tablet UCLM 9-1798. In col. obv. II 12 a $sanga$ -keš₃ is mentioned. With respect to the absence of the ki -determinative, Foxvog commented that this might add ‘support to the notion that – in the mind of the scribe who wrote this tablet at least – Keš was not properly a city, but rather a temple (precinct), either in or near Adab.’ (quotation on p. 74 ad 25).

⁵⁵ See also Edzard 1976-1980.

⁵⁶ That Uruk did have rulers may be explained by the fact that it was primarily Inanna’s town, in which An had also a temple. But there existed no city of which An alone was the city god.

4. A possible meaning of the cylinder text

4.1 Initially Keš was the name of a city with a temple belonging to the mother goddess, who is known under different names: Aruru, Ninmah, Ninḫursaġa. Her son Ašgi was resident in Adab. Due to some calamities described in the Barton cylinder text – salinization, with as a consequence no drink and no food – the city of Keš was abandoned and finally fell into disrepair. The mother goddess also left Keš, and she got a new temple in Adab. After a while the Keš temple was reused or rebuilt.⁵⁷ The original city was not rebuilt; instead a new one, Irišaġrig, was built. This situation continued at least up to and including the Old Babylonian period.

4.2 The disaster described in the cylinder probably can be situated in a limited area and time, in any case in the region of Keš (and perhaps that of Nippur and Zabala) at the beginning of the Early Dynastic period.⁵⁸ It remains uncertain if the extant text of the tablet IAS 174⁵⁹ (about 200 years older than the cylinder text) is a real forerunner of the cylinder text. It may be that the scribe of the cylinder text only copied the cosmogonic introduction. Therefore we can only speculate whether the tablet IAS 174 described the same catastrophe as the cylinder did.

4.3 The purpose of the text of the cylinder remains unknown. The cylinder was found in the neighbourhood of Ninurta's temple Ešumeša in Nippur. Although crucial information on the cylinder, such as a za_3-mi_3 formula, is missing (although it may have been present in a broken part), we may nevertheless tentatively conclude that this cylinder was dedicated to Ninurta and placed in his temple as a votive offering.⁶⁰ The text may have been written by a scribe from Nippur, because of the peculiarities of some cuneiform signs (KA, BI, NAM).⁶¹ But we cannot exclude that the cylinder was brought to Nippur from another place. Examples of objects from cities outside Nippur that were dedicated in Nippurian temples are given by Tinney.⁶² From the cylinder text it appears that the catastrophe for Keš ended due to the intervention by Ninurta. Therefore the statue, the preparation of which was described in col. III, may also be an image of the god Ninurta – the lions at his side are also an indication of this. Ninurta as saviour of the Land is not unknown in Sumerian literature. As Cooper wrote: 'Ninurta has two aspects in Sumerian texts: He is the fierce, irresistible warrior, defending Enlil and Sumer against the foreign mountain-lands, and he is a god of agricultural and animal fertility,...'.⁶³ Both aspects of Ninurta can be found in the cylinder text and in *Lugal-e*.⁶⁴

⁵⁷ Col. XX 9-13 of the Barton cylinder suggest the construction of a new temple.

⁵⁸ Perhaps lines 143-144 of *The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur* (Michalowski 1989, 44-45) echo the disaster described in the cylinder text: 143. keš₃^{ki} an-ed-en-na dili du₃-a šu-lil₂-la₂ ba-ab-du₄ 144. adab^{ki}-bu e₂-id₂-de₃-la₂-a-ri a-e ba-da-ab-be₆ 143. Keš, built all alone on the high steppe, was haunted; 144. The perfect Adab, the settlement stretching out along a river, was deprived of water.

⁵⁹ Tablet IAS 174 has two broken columns; the text may be a duplicate of column II of the Barton cylinder. It is not known how many lines the tablet IAS174 originally contained.

⁶⁰ George (2004²) does not mention a temple of Ninḫursaġa in Nippur,

⁶¹ See section 6 below. Alster and Westenholz (1994, 17) supposed that the text was written in Adab. But then the authors wrote that it is more likely that the text was written in Keš – 'a place closely linked to Adab' – because that place, Ninḫursaġa (Keš) and Ešpeš (Adab) are mentioned.

⁶² Tinney 1996, 55-56.

⁶³ Cooper 1978, 10-11.

⁶⁴ Van Dijk 1983, 143-144, lines 701-709 summarize Ninurta's actions and their results.

4.4 Tinney discussed the city laments as a critical genre.⁶⁵ He cited Green who discerned several themes that may be present, with different emphasis, in such laments: ‘destruction, assignment of responsibility for the destruction, abandonment of the city, restoration, return of the god, and presentation of a prayer.’ All these themes are present in the Barton cylinder, except for the presentation of a prayer, which may have been in a now lost part of the text. The cylinder does not seem to share the use of the rubrics *kirugu* and *gišgigal* with the five known laments. Instead of these rubrics, Tinney considered the possible role in royal ritual as an important argument to define the laments as a group.⁶⁶ However, this aspect is in all probability not applicable to the text of the Barton cylinder. On the other hand, the great correspondence between the themes of the Barton cylinder and those of the city laments justifies the title ‘A lament for Keš’. The cylinder text may even have served as an example for the lament texts, which are all of later date.

5. Transcription and translation

column I

1	u ₄ -ri ₂ -a u ₄ -ri ₂ -še ₃	On that remote day, until that remote day,
2	na-nam	it was indeed;
3	ĝi ₆ -ri ₂ -a ĝi ₆ -ri ₂ -še ₃	in that remote night, until that remote night,
4	na-nam	it was indeed;
5	mu-ri ₂ -a mu-ri ₂ -še ₃	in that remote year, back to that remote year,
6	na-nam	it was indeed.
7	u ₄ na-du ₇ -du ₇	Then gales were blowing,
8	nin na-ĝir ₂ -ĝir ₂	there were flashes of lightning.
9	eš ₃ -nibru ^{ki}	Then, at the sanctuary of Nippur,
10	u ₄ na-du ₇ -du ₇	gales were blowing,
11	nin na-ĝir ₂ -ĝir ₂	there were flashes of lightning.
12	an-ne ₂ ki-da	An-heaven is shouting ^(l. 13) with Ki-earth;
13	gu ₃ am ₆ -dab ₆ -e	
14	ki an-da ₁ gu ₃ am ₆ -dab ₆ -e	Ki-earth is shouting with An-heaven.
15	[...]	[...]

[about 7 lines broken]

column II

1	igi- ^r zi'-gal-an-n[a]	With the true, great Queen of heaven,
2	nin-gal- ^d en-lil ₂	the older sister of Enlil,
3	^d nin-ḥur-saĝ	Ninḥursaĝa,
4	igi-zi-gal-an-na	with the true, great Queen of heaven,

⁶⁵ Tinney 1996, 19-21; quotation p. 20. Tinney also discussed the city laments as an ethnic genre (21-24), opening that paragraph with the words: ‘The city laments have no identifying rubric or subscript from which to infer a connection between them.’

⁶⁶ Tinney 1996, 21 and 24.

5	nin-gal- ^d en-lil ₂	the older sister of Enlil,
6	^d nin-ḫur-saḡ-ra	Ninḫursaḡa,
7	ḡiš ₃ mu-ni-du ₁₁	he has had intercourse;
8	ne mu-ni-sub ₅	he has kissed her;
9	a-maš-imin	the seed for a set of septuplets
10	š[a ₃] mu-ni-ru	he has poured into her womb.
11	ki muš-ḡir ₂ -da	Earth chatted cheerily ^(l. 12) with the muš-ḡir ₂ - snake:
12	bal-bal am ₆ -da-za	
13	^d id ₂ -maḥ	‘Exalted Divine River,
14	niḡ ₂ -tur-zu a mu-da-de ₆	you made your small things bring along water with you;
15	[p]a ₅ -ra diḡir-id ₂ -da-ke ₄	in the canals, the god of the river
16	[...] mu [...]	[...] has [?] [...] ’
17	[...]	[...]

[about 6 lines broken]

column III

1	an-nisig-[x] i ₃ - ^r dim ₂ [?] - ^r ma ¹	built [up to [?]] the blue sky:
2	ugu _x (KA.U.DIB) an-ne ₂ ba-us ₂	the crown reached the sky.
3	ḡeštu ḡi ^s asal ₂ am ₆ -niḡin	The ears are (like) poplars surrounding it.
4	iḡi ḡešt _{in} -duru ₅ ša ₃ -ba mu-ḡar-ḡar	The eyes are (like) fresh grapes that he placed in between.
5	iḡi-babbar ₂ [ḡi ^s ?]-nu ₁₁ -gal	The white of the eyes is alabaster
6	am ₆ -da-dub-e	that he applied around them.
7	gudu ₄ ḡi-zi am ₆ -ḡul ₂	The gudu-priest rejoiced at the reed stalks;
8	nu-kiri ₃ -maḥ lal ₃ -ku ₃ zu	the chief gardener, who has knowledge of the pure syrup,
9	am ₆ -da-ra-ta-bar-e	let it (= the syrup) there overflow from them (= the reed stalks).
10	meli ₂ gaba nunuz-lu ₅ še-a	While the throat and the breast are covered with numerous beads
11	gu ₂ ḡar-pu ₂ -ke ₄	makes ^(l. 13) the gudu-priest, like a man of Aratta ^(l. 12) ,
12	gudu ₄ lu ₂ -aratta-gin ₇	the neck ^(l. 11) as large as ^(l. 13) the brim of a well ^(l. 11) .
13	si am ₆ -sa ₂ -sa ₂ -e	
14	za ₃ -za ₃ piriḡ am ₆ -gub-gub	At both sides stood a lion;
15	šu-si ḡi ^s bad am ₆ -ḡi ₄	the fingers, (like) furniture legs, grasp them.
16	[x x ...]	

[about 6 lines broken]

column IV

1	bur [...] šum ₂ dab ₆	Bowls [...] garlic standing around,
2	[še [?]]-muš [...] bara ₂ -gal niĝin ₂	še-muš-barley [?] [...] surrounding the great canopy.
3	UM ʿkaš ¹ ʿen-lil ₂ (E ₂)	Farinaceous food and beer for Enlil
4	nibru ^{ki} -še ₃	at Nippur
5	giĝ-še ₃ mu-ĝar-ĝar	he caused these to be unhealthy.
6	ʿinanna-ra zabala ^{ki} -še ₃	For Inanna at Zabala
7	giĝ-še ₃ mu-ĝar-ĝar	he caused these to be unhealthy.
8	ʿen-ki-ra ab-zu-še ₃	For Enki at the abzu
9	giĝ-še ₃ mu-ʿĝar ¹ -[ĝar]	he caused these to be unhealthy.
10	UM kaš ʿen-lil ₂ (E ₂)	Instead of farinaceous food and beer Enlil
11	nibru ^{ki} u ₂ nu-še ₃ -gu ₇ -e	will not take food in Nippur
12	a nu-še ₃ -na ₈ -na ₈	(and) he will not drink water instead.
13	baḥar ₂ -ninda-kum ₂ -na	In his pot for warm bread
14	ninda-kum ₂ nu-mu-ĝal ₂	there was no warm bread;
15	baḥar ₂ -ninda-te-na	in his pot for cold bread
16	[ninda-te nu-mu-ĝal ₂]	[there was no cold bread].

[about 6 lines broken]

column V

1	[... x x]	
2	ʿen-ʿlil ₂ ¹ (E ₂) unu-a mu-dug ₄	Enlil spoke in the sanctuary.
3	a-ʿmun ₄ ¹ a-ne ʿsa ₂ ¹ ba-dug ₄	‘The brackish water was conveyed by him!
4	a-mun ₄ a-ne ba-la ₂ -la ₂	The brackish water was led everywhere by him!
5	ʿen-lil ₂ (E ₂) a-ne ʿsa ₂ ¹ ba-dug ₄	Enlil, <i>he</i> conveyed it!
6	a-mun ₄ a-ne ba-la ₂ -la ₂	The brackish water was led everywhere by him!
7	baḥar ₂ -ninda-kum ₂ -za	In your pot for warm bread
8	ninda-kum ₂ nu-mu-ĝal ₂	was no warm bread.
9	ʿbaḥar ₂ -ninda-te-za	In your pot for cold bread
10	ninda-te nu-mu-ĝal ₂	was no cold bread.
11	ĝir ₂ -maḥ ĝa ₂ -gu ₄ -gu ₇ -gu ₇ -zu	The Ĝirmaḥ, the house where you eat oxen,
12	eš ₃ -ʿnibru ^{ki} ¹	the shrine in Nippur:
13	na ₄ ¹ (NI.IGI)-bi a-ne ba-nu ₂	its stones he laid down.
14	zabar-maḥ-zu an-gišgal	Your sublime bronze bowl on the top of the pedestal
15	ĝa ₂ [x] nu-mu-gin ₆	did he not not establish in the ... house.

[about 7 lines broken]

column VI

1	[^d inanna-ra zabala ^{ki} -še ₃]	[For Inanna at Zabala]
2	'gig-še ₃ mu-ĝar-ĝar'	he caused these to be unhealthy.
3	' ^d en-ki-ra' ab-zu-še ₃	For Enki at the abzu
4	gig-še ₃ mu-ĝar-ĝar	he caused these to be unhealthy.'
5	nam-'ta-e ₃ '	Then he appeared!
6	nam-'ta-e ₃ '	Then he appeared!
7	ud gi ₆ - ^r ta e ₃ '-a	After the sun had appeared from the night
8	^d nin-urta	then Ninurta
9	nam-ta-e ₃	appeared!
10	ud gi ₆ -ta ' ^r e ₃ '-a	After the sun had appeared from the night
11	kuš-'piriĝ' bar nam-mi-mu ₄	he wrapped himself in a lion's hide.
12	kuš-piriĝ-piriĝ	Lions' hides
13	za ₃ mu-ni-keš ₂	he girded on.
14	si-si-ma-ta-za	'Fill it for me with it,
15	la ₂ -la ₂ -ma-[ta-za]	distribute it for me from it.'

[about 7 lines broken]

column VII

1	[...] še ₃ [...]	[.....]
2	[.....]	[.....]
3	[...] 'UM' 'gig'	'[...] farinaceous food [] unhealthy,
4	zid ₂ ? x-na-za	the flour? ... in/of your ...,
5	guruš-'zi' [ki]-aĝ ₂ - ^r ĝa ₂ '	the loyal beloved young man,
6	guruš-[x] am ₆ -ma-'kar'	that [...] young man took it away there.
7	'kaš gudu _x '-ra' kaš sanga-ra	Beer for the gudu-priest?, beer for the sanga:
8	de ₂ mu-na-ni-'tak ₄ '	he omitted the pouring out of it for them.
9	ama-ĝu ₁₀ zid ₂ -ku ₃ a de ₆ na-kal?	My mother, to bring pure flour and water is valuable?,
10	guruš-zu niĝin ₂ na-dab ₆ - ^r lu ₃ '	(but) now your young man is disturbing everything for her.
11	ama-ĝu ₁₀ nin kaš<-da> nu-me-a	While my mother is a lady without beer,
12	UM gig a-ne ba-e	he says: "Farinaceous food is unhealthy."
13	šilam _x -tud u ₂ <-da> nu-me-a	While the bearing mother cow is without food,
14	a gig a-ne ' ^r ba-e'	he says: "Water is unhealthy."
15	UM [x ...]	Farinaceous food [...]

[about 7 lines broken]

column VIII

1	[.....]	.....
2	[.....]	.....
3	[...] na [...]	.....
4	[... x .. x..]	.....
5	[.....]	.....
6	IM [x .. x] TAR	Rain/wind? determine(d)
7	[x] 'maḥ ¹	..... exalted
8	giḡ na gi ² [x]	unhealthy
9	za ₃ -za temen mu-ni-si	Next to you he drove a foundation peg in.
10	dumu na-'nam ¹	It was indeed the son.
11	gud-ḡu ₁₀ za ₃ -be ₂	At the side of my ox,
12	ki-tur ₅ -ra-be ₂	at its sick place,
13	a-ab-ki-duru ₅ < ^d >'nin-urta ¹ ḡeštu gub	while Ninurta was paying attention to the seawater of the flooded ground,
14	ki ² -ub ₅ [du ₁₂ ¹ a [...]]	the place ² where the drums are played ...

[about 8 lines broken]

column IX

1	dumu [.....]	The son ...
2	ki mu [.. x ..] bad ²	The place
3	nam-ta ¹ -e ₃	At his appearance
4	ša ₃ -am-gud nam-gub	he stood amidst the oxen and the wild bulls.
5	níḡ ² ḤI ² [x] 'DU ¹ .DU	Good deliveries (?) ...
6	[x..x..x]	.....
7	^[d] nin-[ḥur]-saḡ	Ninḥursaḡa
8	'dumu ¹ -ne-ne-<ra>	has, for their children,
9	nam mu-ne-tar	determined the fate.
10	im-si-sa ₂ -ra	For the north wind
11	nam mu-ni-tar	she determined the fate.
12	ḡen-na a-zu ₅ -lugal	Go now royal physician!
13	zi-zu ḥe ₂ -mi-aḡ ₂ (LAK 114)	May you measure out your breath of life.
14	sipa anše til ₃ -la ²	The shepherd who let donkeys live
15	[x.....]	.....

[about 7 lines broken]

column X

1	[...] NI ^[d] nin-ḥur-[saḡ]	.... Ninḥursaḡa ...
2	'lu ₂ ¹ [?] lu ₂ [..?] til ₃ [..]	let live all people
3	[x] [.....]	.....
4	[...] [im]-si-[sa ₂] [.....]	..... the north wind ...

5	lu ₂ -[ulu ₃ [?]]-ru-a-zu	Your people that were thrown down,
6	lu ₂ -ulu ₃ KI/DI [...]	the people
7	[...x .. x ...]	.....
8	[a [?]]-zu ₅ -bi ħe ₂ -<am ₆ >	may he be their physician.
9	tumu-še ₁₂ -niġin ₂	For the entire cold wind
10	nam mu-ni-tar	she determined the fate.
11	ġen-na ^d en-ki-du	Go now Enkimdu!
12	ku-li-zu ħe ₂ -am ₆	May it be your friend.
13	ki-su ₇ - ^d en-lil ₂ (E ₂) gub-[ba [?]]	Enter the threshing floor of Enlil.
14	lu ₂ lu ₂ -ra	One man for the other man
15	[... x ...]	.....

[about 7 lines broken]

Column XI is completely lost.

column XII

1	[.....]	.....
2	[.....]	.....
3	[^d nin-ur]ta e ₃ -da	At the time when Ninurta was appearing,
4	keš ₃ -ta ba-ta-e ₃	she had left Keš.
5	[.] niġ ₂ -gu ₇ - ^d en-lil ₂ (E ₂)	[.] the food of Enlil
6	[...] da [...] til ₃	..... (s)he lived with ...
7	^d [i]rġan	Irġan,
8	[l]u ₂ -[s]a ₆ -ga	the beautiful man,
9	[...] X [...] til ₃	... lived / did live...

[about 13 lines broken]

column XIII

1	[.....]	.....
2	[... a]n-še ₃ [...]	... to heaven/the top (?) ...
3	idig[na]-[ku ₃] bura[nun-ku ₃]-ge	For the pure Tigris (and) the pure Euphrates
4	ġidru-ku ₃ - ^d en-lil ₂ (E ₂)	he placed ^(l. 5) the pure staff of Enlil
5	ħur-[s]aġ mu-gub	on the mountain range.
6	ur ₂ -bi [?] ħe ₂ -[u]s ₂ [?]	May its roots rest in it;
7	pa-bi uri[n] [...]	[may [?]] its branches [become [?]] a standard,
8	bar-ba amar [...]	[may [?]] at its outside ... a young;
9	nunuz ki [ħa-ba [?]]-[ta]g	[may [?]] eggs be laid.
10	[... l]u ₂ [...] za	.....
11	[... x] [... x]	.....
12	[.....] E ₂	.....
13	[... x] [... x]	.....
14	[.....]	.....

[about 8 lines broken]

column XIV

1	[.....]	.....
2	[.....]	.....
3	[...] kur-[ra [?]] al- ^r lu ₂ ¹	[...] in the mountain were numerous.
4	am-giggi al-lu ₂	Black bulls were numerous.
5	am-babbar al-lu ₂	White bulls were numerous.
6	am-si ₄ al-lu ₂	Bright red bulls were numerous.
7	am-dara ₄ al-lu ₂	Dark red bulls were numerous.
8	anše-nisku (PIRIĜ) kuš kad ₅ (= LAK173)	The best donkeys, for the gathering of hides,
9	an-ga-lu ₂	were numerous too.
10	^{anše} si ₂ -si ₂ -ḥur-saĝ	Mountain horses
11	an-še ₃ al-e ₁₁ ¹ (DU ₆ .KAŠ ₄)	ran upwards;
12	ama-lu ₅ al-tuš	there dwelt the mother goddess.
13	sig ₂ -sig ₂ al-kad ₄ (= LAK171)	All pelts were gathered.
14	uz ₃ -zi-za ^[d] r nin-ḥur-saĝ ¹	In your fertile nanny goats ... Ninḥursaĝa ...

[about 8 lines broken]

column XV

1	[.....]	.....
2	[.....]	.....
3	[...] ^r gi ¹	.....
4	^r keš ₃ -še ₃ mu ¹ -gi ₄ -gi ₄	‘He brings her back to Keš’,
5	gu ₃ -nar-ne gu ₃ -nar-ne	(resounded) the voices of the singers.
6	iri da-ba-la	While in the city Dabala
7	e ₂ -e mud	was worried about the temple,
8	mušen a-ba-šub-be ₂	after they have laid down birds,
9	^{kuš} a-ga ₂ -la ₂ -ke ₄ zid ₂ a-ba-ta-si-ge	those of the leather sacks had drawn out flour from it,
10	^{kuš} ummu ₃ -ke ₄ a a-ba-ta-de ₂	(and) those of the waterskins had poured water from it,
11	da-ba-la-e gal i ₃ -ga-mu-zu	only at that point did Dabala understand it fully!
12	e ₂ - ^ĝ u ₁₀ ¹ mud	‘While I was worried about my temple,
13	mušen a-ba-šub-be ₂	after they have laid down birds,
14	^{kuš} a-ga ₂ -la ₂ -ke ₄ zid ₂ a-ba-ta-si-ge	those of the leather sacks had drawn out flour from it,
15	[^{kuš} ummu ₃ -ke ₄ a a-ba-ta-de ₂]	[(and) those of the waterskins had poured water from it,]

[about 7 lines broken]

column XVI

1	[... x]	.....
2	^[d] nin-ḥur-saġ-ke ₄ [eš ₂ [?]]-da-me	Ninḥursaġa took ^(l. 3) our cultic vessel [?]
3	ku ₃ -me šu-na mu-dab ₅	(and) our silver in her hands.
4	diġir <niġ ₂ ->ba-da ġa ₂ -e mu-na-ni-ġi ₄ -ġi ₄	The goddess sent these back to her temple together with the gifts.
5	pisan-ku ₃ -ga-me pisan-šen-na [!] (GA)-me	Our basket for the silver (and) our basket for the cauldrons,
6	lu ₂ -du ₈ -ku ₃ -niġin-me	took ^(l. 9) our man who collects all the silver,
7	nu-kiri ₃ ġid[ru]-ku ₃ -sig ₁₇	our gardener who is
8	ne-sub ₅ -me	kissing the golden sceptre ^(l. 7) ,
9	šu-ne ₂ nam-ma-dab ₅ -[dab ₅]	now in his hands.
10	kaš 2 [...] mu-na-[de ₂ [?]]	He poured beer out ^(?) in two ... for her.
11	2 pi-ḥu [?] mu-n[a-d]e ₂	Two beer jars poured he out for her.
12	šag ₄ -gub-ki-aġ ₂ -a-bé	In the beloved vessels for it
13	kaš mu-da-ni-šub	he put down beer for her.
14	^d irḥan	Irḥan

[about 8 lines broken]

column XVII

1	[... gal [?]] ḤI/ŠAR ₂ [?] DUG [?] /bi [?] sur ₃ [?] canal [?] .
2	idigna-ku ₃ buranun-ku ₃ -ge	For the pure Tigris (and) the pure Euphrates
3	ġidru-ku ₃ -šeš-ġu ₁₀ -	the divine man ^(l. 5) has set up now ^(l. 5) the pure staff of my brother
4	^d en-lil ₂ (E ₂)	Enlil.
5	lu ₂ - ^r diġir [!] nam-gu[b]	
6	dumu [...]	The son
7	[...] MI [...]	.....
8	^r d ⁿ in [!] -ḥur-saġ-ke ₄	Ninḥursaġa
9	šembi-zi-dul igi-du ₈ -i ₃ -li	applied ^(l. 10) covering antimony paste, a gift of oil,
10	igi-na ba-ni-ġar	to her eyes.
11	zag-e ₃ -keš ₃ nam-mi-gub	Then she took up a position at a buttress of Keš;
12	sig-še ₃ <igi> ba-ni-il ₂	she looked downward:
13	sig-še ₃ lu ₂ nu-[...]	nobody ... below.
14	PA [...]	.....

[about 8 lines broken]

column XVIII

1	[.....]	.....
2	[.....]	....
3	e ₂ [?] mu-na-kuš ₂ ¹ (U ₂)	Her temple had fallen into disrepair.
4	u ₄ -bi a-ša ₄ zal-la	That day, passed in complaining,
5	[g]i ₆ -bi [a]-ša ₄ šu ₄ -am ₆	that night, fallen while there was complaining,
6	[^d i]rḥan	Irḥan
7	[.. x] KU [...] x	.....
8	e ₂ ² [.....]	The temple ...
9	dumu-ĝu ₁₀ ĝa ₂ [...]	My son ... the house ...
10	a-na [?] a m[u ...]	What ...
11	LU[L] [.. x ..]	.....

[about 11 lines broken]

column XIX

1	[.....]	.....
2	[... x] ^d eš-peš	... Ešpeš
3	gal i ₃ -ga-mu-zu	understood it fully.
4	abul si-ĝar ba-ĝar	The bolt was drawn on the city gate;
5	ig-6 ² šu-a mu-[..]- ^r kešda ¹	he blocked the six ² doors.
6	a[b]-ta-e ₃ ¹ (E) an i ₃ -ma-šu ₂ -šu ₂	She left it, the heaven darkened.
7	^r d ⁱ rḥan ¹	Irḥan
8	[.....]	.....
9	[.....]	.....
10	[...] mu-ta-[...]	.....
11	igi an-še ₃ i ₃ -il ₂ -da	While he was looking towards the heaven,
12	šaḥ-giš-gi-gin ₇	like a wild boar,
13	[... n]a m[u ...]	.....

[about 9 lines broken]

column XX

1	[u ₄]	When ^(l. 3) [the days]
2	[x]-nam-[s]a ₆ -ga	[x] of pleasure
3	[ba]-ra-zal me-nam	have passed?
4	[u ₄]-ĝa ₂ -tuš- ^r a ¹ ma-da	When ^(l. 6) [the days] of the dwelling in the house,
5	maḥ-bi sa ₆ -ga	utmost pleasant for the Land ^(l. 4) ,
6	ba-ra-zal me-nam	have passed?
7	[ku]run ₂ -kaš ₂ -gin ₇	May like kurun-beer
8	ḥul ₂ -zi ḥe ₂ -dub-e	true joy be stewed.
9	ki-nam-nita-ni	The architect ^(l. 10)

10	muš-dam temen-še ₃ mu-dim ₂	made his ‘place of manliness’ ^(l. 9) the foundations.
11	da ĠIŠ:LAK263:MA:NUN	At the side: <i>armannu</i> -trees;
12	ki-ninda-te ₉ -‘kum ₂ -ka’	on the place for the cold and warm bread
13	[...] na [...] ‘DU’	..... placed?.

[about 9 lines broken]

6. Comments

General comments

The usual syntax in Sumerian sentences is subject-object-verb; this order is not always followed in the present text. The time of the cylinder’s preparation is not precisely known: the script suggests ‘a date toward the end of the Early Dynastic period, or perhaps Early Sargonic Times’.⁶⁷ It may be that at that time a standardized sign sequence in the cases was not completely used.⁶⁸ Case-endings are often not written; e.g. it is not unusual for the ergative-ending *e to be missing. Alster and Westenholz also wrote about the characteristics of several signs, ‘notably KA and BI, [which] show forms without parallels in other contemporary texts from Nippur while they are regular only in texts from Adab’.⁶⁹ Biggs showed that the form of the ‘Barton’ sign KA could be found in texts from Nippur and Adab;⁷⁰ on the other hand, the sign NAM in the Barton text is specific to Nippur but not to Adab.⁷¹ The shape of the sign BI in the Barton cylinder shows a ‘spout’, a downwards slanting wedge on the upper side of the sign. This form appears in Sargonic texts from the province Nippur but not in Adab,⁷² and also in pre-Sargonic texts from Mari, Ebla, and Tell Beydar.⁷³ On the basis of these data it is most likely that the text of the Barton cylinder was written in Nippur in the late Early Dynastic or early Sargonic period; after all, the cylinder was found in the proximity of what has presumably been Ninurta’s temple Ešumeša in Nippur.

Comments on the translation

*Column III*⁷⁴

1. Barton’s copy shows clearly the initial signs AN SAR, transcribed as an-nisig. The combination an-nisig is also present in ‘The building of Ningîrsu’s temple’, Cyl. A XXI 8 and 14. The other remaining signs in the copies of Barton and of Alster and Westenholz may correspond with NI DIM₂ MA. The dim₂ was more or less guessed. As will be clear from the following: I suppose that the design of a huge idol and some of its parts are described in

⁶⁷ Alster and Westenholz 1994, 17.

⁶⁸ Englund 1998, 71.

⁶⁹ Alster and Westenholz 1994, 17.

⁷⁰ Biggs 1973b, 45.

⁷¹ Biggs 1973b, 44; Such-Gutiérrez 2015, 451.

⁷² Such-Gutiérrez 2004, 291, 296; Such-Gutiérrez 2015, 451; Westenholz 1975, pl. XIII no. 173 II 2.

⁷³ Charpin 1987, 126 (Mari); Pettinato *et al.* 1981, 362, no. 312 (Ebla); Sallaberger 1996, 44, no. 214 Tel Beydar).

⁷⁴ Col. I and II (with comments) were published in Lisman 2013 30-31, 236-240.

this column III. Because of the broken end of column II it is unclear who built it, for whom it was built, or who may be represented (presumably a deity).

2. After the first sign – KA – two other signs are recognizable on the photograph of the cylinder: U and DIB. This DIB is identical to that part of the sign u_3 in LAK 432. My supposition is that U DIB in fact represents IGI. DIB = u_3 . Together the two signs KA = gu_3 and u_3 form a syllabic spelling, though in the reverse order, for / ugu / ‘crown, skull’.

3. The complete sign combination for $\hat{g}i\check{s}asa_1l_2$ is $\hat{g}i\check{s}A.TU.GABA.LI\check{S}$ (Borger 2010, 213, no. 839). In this line it is written $\hat{g}i\check{s}TU.GABA.LI\check{S}$. In the translation ‘(like) poplars’, the word ‘like’ is absent in the Sumerian text. I suppose that the ears are not real poplars, but that they only are like poplars because of their size.

4. The interpretation of the ‘eyes are (like) fresh grapes’ may be that the eyes of the idol were made of, most likely, some red-coloured stone material. $duru_5$ ‘fresh’ is especially said of fish and fruit.

5-6. These lines make clear that in line 4 the iris of the eyes was meant, and that the rest of the eyes, i.e. the sclera – was filled up with alabaster or alabaster-like material. In the word for ‘alabaster’ the determinative na_4 is absent. The identity of the ‘he’ – a ‘she’ seems less probable – is unknown. The prefix *b-da ‘beside them’ (= the grapes) is translated as ‘around them’.

7-9. The *gi-zi* reed (Akkadian: *kīsu*; CAD K, 433, *kīsu* C) may be a special kind of reed, ‘fresh, young reed’ or ‘a particular stage in the growth of the common reed’.⁷⁵ However, due to the context the literal meaning ‘upright reed’ may be meant, and thus: ‘reed stalks’. Alster and Westenholz supposed a final la_2 in the line 7. In my opinion the final vertical cuneiform stroke is part of the sign hu_1l_2 , which means that the horizontal stroke (clearly visible on the picture) of the supposed la_2 cannot be explained. Alternatively, the text may have been meant as: $hu_1l_2-la_2$. In that case the translation has to be changed in: ‘While the $gudu_4$ -priest rejoiced at the reed stalks’. $nu-KA$ was transcribed as $nu-kiri_3$ and I suppose that this was written for $nu-kiri_6$ ‘gardener’. For bar ‘to overflow’, see PSD B, 111 ad 5. The comitative prefix *da can refer to ‘a place in or into the proximity of which the subject or direct object of the verb is located’, here translated as ‘there’.⁷⁶

The supposition is that in the lines 7-9 there is a reference to a sacrifice (libation) or drinking ritual for the image of a deity. The $gudu_4$ -priest most likely is the ‘cultic officiant’ involved in this ritual, and he was responsible for the sacrifices to the gods.⁷⁷ The ‘chief gardener’ is in my opinion also a cultic person involved in the ritual, responsible for the syrup (la_1l_3). The syrup may be drunk with a (long) reed stem.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Pomponio 1989, 231; Civil 1991, 44.

⁷⁶ Jagersma 2010, 451.

⁷⁷ Renger 1969, 160 (§ 186); 162 (§ 189); Sallaberger and Huber Vulliet 2003-2006, 630, § 5.3.1; Westenholz 2013, 248-249.

⁷⁸ Examples of banquet scenes in which the participants are drinking via long reed stems were given by Orthmann *et al.* 1985, figs. 131d, e (text: p. 231), fig. 132b (text p. 232); Collon 1988, 30, figs. 89-92, 94; Klengel-Brandt 1997, 7, fig. 5.

10. For KA-LI = $me\ li_2 = nemlû$ ‘throat’, see CAD N II, 165 *sub nemlû*, lexical part. In my opinion LUL = lu_5 is used for lu ‘abundant, numerous’.⁷⁹ With respect to $\check{s}e$: I suppose that it phonographically represents SIG₇, the plural base of $ti.l$ ‘to dwell; to live’, which was translated here as ‘(to be) fully covered’.

12. I cannot exclude the possibility that indeed ‘a man of Aratta’ is meant in this line, thus referring to an unknown story. As Sjöberg and Bergmann discussed at line 90 of the Temple Hymns, *aratta* may also have the meaning of ‘respected’.⁸⁰

14. Compare the dream of Gudea which he told to Nanše and which she then explained to him: *Ninĝirsu* was flanked by lions.⁸¹

15. One of the meanings of gi_4 – the sign is clearly present in Barton’s copy – is ‘to go around’; this led to my interpretation that the fingers of the statue ‘go around’ both lions, in other words: the fingers of the statue hold them tightly. ‘Fingers like chair/furniture legs’: this gives an indication of the size of the fingers of the statue.

Column IV

1-2. This is a typical example where Barton’s text copy still has several signs, contrary to that of Alster and Westenholz. Both lines may be expressing the idea that several forms of food are placed around the statue as an offering. *Enannatum* fashioned a ‘bowl for crushing garlic’ for *Ninĝirsu*.⁸²

3. The case endings – in this case $*ra$ behind $^d en-lil_2$ – are often missing in this text. The words UM and $ka\check{s}$ (l. 10) are used in parallel to the words u_2 ‘food’ and a ‘water’ (ll. 11-12). As $ka\check{s}$ is a processed product, the same may be supposed for UM, the more so as unprocessed barley (*ûm*) is not a suitable offering/meal for a god. Therefore I presume that UM represents some kind of farinaceous food.

5. gig ‘(to be) sick, troublesome’. For the expression $gig-\check{s}e_3 \hat{g}ar$ ‘to cause trouble’: see Alster 1997, 324 (UET 6/2, 367); this led to the translation ‘to cause to be unhealthy’ in the present text. $*\check{s}e_3$ is taken as the terminative following Alster and Westenholz (1994, 34).

13. The pre-Sargonic sign EDIN = $ba\check{h}ar_2$ is present in the Early Dynastic Vessel list (l. 8), and as such it represents a kind of vessel or pot. For the development of the sign EDIN, see Waetzoldt 1971 (more literature in Borger 2010, 102 no. 300).

Column V

2. The signs AB and A are still clearly visible in the Barton copy. Alster and Westenholz read $x-\check{s}e_3$. My supposition is that $x-\check{s}e_3$ is only one sign (which cannot be identified any more from the picture), because the space for x in the case of $x-\check{s}e_3$ is very small. The Barton

⁷⁹ Steinkeller 1984, 9.

⁸⁰ Sjöberg and Bergmann 1969, 70.

⁸¹ *The Building of Ninĝirsu’s Temple* (ETCSL 2.1.7), cyl. A IV 19: $zid-da\ gabu_2-na\ piri\hat{g}\ i_3-nu_2-nu_2$.

⁸² Frayne 2008, RIME 1.9.4.4: 11. $^d nin-\hat{g}ir_2-su_2-ra$ 12. $bur\ \check{s}um_2\ gaz$ 13. $mu-na-dim_2$ 11. for *Ninĝirsu* 12. (this) bowl for crushing garlic 13. he fashioned.

copy, suggesting the sign AB, together with the *še₃ read by Alster and Westenholz, led me to suppose that the *še₃ represents the ‘*gunû*’ part of the sign unu. This unu is the most sacred part of a temple, probably that part where the god’s statue was present. The verbal form mu-du g₄ (*hamtu* stem) indicates that Enlil’s words are in the preceding lines.

3. Probably someone starts to speak to Enlil about the disasters brought about by someone else. The names of both the speaker and the one who brought about the disasters have not been preserved. The impression is that the speaker could be Ninḫursaĝa, whose temple and city are also in danger, as appears from the further development of this text. This saying or complaint probably ends at line VI 4.

4, 6. ‘Everywhere’: the verbal form la₂-la₂ is interpreted as the iterative form of the *hamtu*-stem. Brackish water is unfavourable and is not appreciated. Some examples in the literature are: *The Lament for Sumer and Urim*, line 9: id₂-bi a-mun₄-na tum₃-u₃-de₃ ‘that watercourses should carry brackish water’, as one of the disasters that the gods decided for Sumer;⁸³ in *The Death of Ur-Namma* (ETCSL 2.4.1.1), line 83 we read: ‘... a-kur-ra mun₄-na-am₃ ‘the water of the netherworld is brackish’.

5. This line gives the clue for the translation of IV 3-5. If Enlil had put the food and beer under taboo, then this line would have been: ^den-lil₂ (E₂) za-e [or perhaps: ze₂-e] sa₂ ba-du g₄ ‘Enlil, you conveyed it!’ Moreover, it seems very illogical that Enlil made his own food and drink unsuitable for consumption (see col. IV 3-5). Thus Enlil is a vocative case.

11. ĝir₂-maḥ ‘Exalted Knife’ is supposed to be the name of a part of a temple. Perhaps it refers to the slaughterhouse associated with the temple. Compare, e.g.,: 1. Gudea Cyl. A XXVIII: 7. ĝir₂-kun₂-na-bi 8. gud gu₇ udu gu₇ ‘7. its Ĝirkun(na) 8. consumes oxes, consumes sheep’ (‘its’ refers to the Eninnu); and 2. LSU line 312: ĝir₂-kun₂-a gud udu gu₇-a u₂-šim-e ba-[da?]-na₂ ‘At the Ĝirkun where oxen and sheep are consumed one now is hungry’.⁸⁴

13. Alster and Westenholz already suggested the reading na₄ for the combination NI-IGI. ‘Its stones he laid down’ may be interpreted as the destruction of the Ĝirmaḥ.

15. The sign, transcribed as ‘ni’[?] by Alster and Westenholz, is reproduced differently by Barton, while on the picture that part of the case appears to be broken, so no conclusion can be drawn about it.

Column VI

1. This line most likely is a repetition of line IV 6.

4. This line most likely is the end of the complaint expressed to Enlil.

⁸³ Michalowski 1989, 36-37.

⁸⁴ Gudea Cyl. A, see ETCSL 2.1.7; For LSU I. 312: see Michalowski 1989, 54-55. Michalowski comments on this line (on p. 96), in agreement with Cooper, that u₂-šim... na₂ ‘to lie in the grass’, because of a contrast with ‘eating good food’, has to be translated as ‘to lie hungry’.

14-15. Both these sentences were interpreted as imperatives, and the *ta as instrumental ablative.⁸⁵ The final *za – instead of *ze₂-en – may have been written under the influence of the preceding *ma-ta. An example in which *za was written instead of *ze₂-en was found in the Gudea Cyl. B II 6: ^da-nun-na bar-ĝu₁₀-a šud₃ ħe₂-mi-sa₄-za ‘O Anunna, may you pray on my behalf.’

Column VII

4. Barton’s copy shows more signs than that of Alster and Westenholz, but it was not possible to make a sound transcription of them. The first sign was interpreted, due to the context, as zid₂. If the interpretation of the final *za is correct, then we may be dealing here again with direct speech (‘in/of your...’). The other possibility is that x-na-za is an imperative form analogous to the forms in VI 14-15.

6. The verb kar may be inferred from the copy of Alster and Westenholz, and also from the context. The *AN/am₆ is clearly present in Barton’s copy. Instead of *am₆ belonging to the prefix of the verbal expression, it might have been intended as an enclitic copula; the sentence then would be: guruš-x-am₆ ma-kar. However, due to the context the verbal expression ma-kar, with a meaning such as ‘took it *for me*’, is less likely.

7. Because of a supposed parallelism with sanga ‘the chief administrator of a temple household’, the sign after the first kaš may be another temple official. The remaining part of that sign in Barton’s copy has the contour of 𒄩I (in the copy of Alster and Westenholz is much less left of it). Therefore I suppose in this place a gu du-priest, written perhaps without the concluding ME-sign, and therefore transcribed here as gu du_x.⁸⁶ A gu du-priest was already mentioned in column III 7 and 12.

8. The suggestion of Alster and Westenholz to read the final sign as za seems to be less likely, because the resulting verbal construction ‘mu¹-na-ni-‘za¹(?)-‘x¹’ does not seem to have any significance in this sentence. With the aid of Barton’s copy and the remaining part of this sign in the copy of Alster and Westenholz I suggest reading tak₄. The meaning of the lines 7-8 is, in my opinion, that the ‘young man’ prevented the bad beer from being used by the gu du-priest or by the sanga.

9. The sign kal is suggested by Barton’s copy of the text, in which also DU (= de₆) is clearly visible.

10. The last sign, judging from Barton’s copy, may be lu₃. In any case, a marû stem is expected because of the *b – referring to niĝin₂ – before the verbal stem. Here too, the ‘young man’ prevents Ninĝursaĝa receiving bad flour and water.

11. The sign transcribed as kaš seems to miss some characteristics of the sign BI (see Barton’s copy, and compare with bi in, e.g., VIII 11-12), but this sign is the most likely one due to the context.

⁸⁵ Jagersma 2010, 457, examples 76-77.

⁸⁶ Attestations of gu du_x can be found in the series of the tablets MS 2181 (Early Dynastic III period), and in a copy of *Enlil in the E-kur*, the line 58 (CDLI P478849).

Column VIII

13. a-ab ‘sea(water)’ most likely is a metaphor for the brackish water that had made the soil infertile.

14. The upper row of the signs in this case shows $ki^? - ub_5$. The pictogram of ub_5 was $AB_2.ZAG$, and later it became AB_2xTAK_4 .⁸⁷ To judge from the picture of the cylinder, the last sign is ZAG (not TAK_4 as transcribed by Alster and Westenholz) due to the band in the middle of that sign which is still clearly visible and which is characteristic of ZAG . Krispijn described the development of the ub_5 pictogram, which represents a percussion instrument, and according to its pictogram ‘a slightly diabolo-shaped drum’.⁸⁸

Column IX

3. ‘At his appearance’, i.e., that of Ninurta. The transcription $nam-ta-e_3$ is based on Barton’s copy, with an emendation of his $*na$ to $*ta$. With respect to the transcription e_3 it is noteworthy that in this case the sign UD is not written in the ‘niche’ at the top of the sign DU as is usual (see e.g. col. VI 9). But there are other examples from the Early Dynastic period in which the UD was written before the DU sign when representing the verb e_3 (e.g. DP 293, rev. I 2; DP 341 II 3; VS 14, 75 rev. I 3; VS 27, 60 rev. II 1⁸⁹).

4. The first sign in the copy of Alster and Westenholz seems to be $šag_4$; in Barton’s copy a clear ki is visible.

5. The extant signs as shown by Alster and Westenholz may be transcribed as $ni\hat{g}_2-du_{10} la\check{h}_5$.

8. If $dumu-ne-ne$ should mean ‘her children’, one should expect $dumu-ne_2-ne$ instead. In the literature of the Old Babylonian period some examples can be found in which $*ne-ne$ is used instead of $*ne_2-ne$ (e.g. in *Inana’s Descent to the Netherworld* [ETCSL 1.4.1], lines 230 and 257).

10. Alster (1997, 114 *ad* S.P. 4.9) transcribes $im-si-sa_2$.

12. $a-zu_5-lugal$, literally ‘the royal physician’, may be an epithet for the north wind.

13. The sign LAK 114 is the later sign $a\hat{g}_2$, which here may be used as an abbreviation for the expression $pa-a\hat{g}_2$ ‘to breathe’. $zi\dots pa-a\hat{g}_2$ ‘to breathe life into’. There are examples of the propitious qualities of the north wind. Proverb S.P. 4.9 (Alster 1997, 114): $im-si-sa_2 im-si-am_3$ ‘The north wind is the wind of satisfaction’.

14. Barton’s copy has $an\check{e}$ as second sign in the upper row, which could not be identified any more in the copy by Alster and Westenholz.

⁸⁷ Civil 2008, 101 *ad* no. 213.

⁸⁸ Krispijn 2010, 126 and 130.

⁸⁹ CDLI nos. P220943, P220991, P020090, P020376.

Column X

1. Alster and Westenholz only give traces for this line. Barton copied several signs which at first glance may be transcribed as NI DU₃ LAGAB 𒄩I. In IX and probably also in X Ninḫursaġa is active. This part of the cylinder is rather damaged; if the wedges inside the signs DU₃ LAGAB 𒄩I originally were superficially inscribed, it is possible that those had already disappeared when Barton copied this text. Therefore I suppose that DU₃ LAGAB may be interpreted as representing nin, and 𒄩I as ḫur. There is space enough in this case for the sign saġ.

5. lu₂-[ulu₃?]-ru-a-zu ‘Your people that were thrown down’: this may point to the disasters (no water, no food) that happened, not only to the gods but also to the people.

9. A.MUŠ₃ = še₁₂ ‘cold’. Barton’s copy shows clearly ZA.MUŠ₃, but the signs for A and ZA are not always clearly distinguished (Krebernik 1998, 280), at least in texts from Fara and Abū Šalābīḥ. The Old Babylonian tablet IM 070209 rev. III 1-7 mentions several kinds of winds, including im-niġin₂.

11. Enkidu/Enkimdu is the god of the irrigation canals and of cultivation (Edzard 1965, 59). This god seems to be absent in the god lists of Fara and Abū Šalābīḥ (but may have been present in one of the broken parts). The name is present in the god list TLC XV 10, X 28 (de Genouillac 1923, 106), and in some literary texts, where he is indeed the god of the irrigation and farming: *The Death of Ur-Namma* [ETCSL 2.4.1.1.], lines 25 and A15; *A Praise Poem of Ur-Namma* [ETCSL 2.4.1.3], line 75; *Dumuzid and Enkimdu* [ETCSL 4.08.33], lines 41, 70 and 82⁹⁰; *The Song of the Ploughing Oxen: An ululumama to Ninurta* [ETCSL 5.5.5], lines 93 and 141.

Column XII

3. Barton’s copy makes it clear that in this line the verb e₃ (= UD.DU) was written, and not e₁₁/ed₃ (= DU₆.DU). A literature search showed that the form *e₃-da was frequently used with the meaning ‘at the coming out/the appearance of’, ‘when ... came out/appeared’.⁹¹ The form e₃.d is the *marû* form of the verb e₃.

4. ‘She’ must be Ninḫursaġa, the goddess of Keš; she left Keš because she could leave the situation to Ninurta. In XV 4-5 her return is sung of.

6. If *da belongs to til₃, it should be translated as ‘to dwell at’, but the context – ‘the food of Enlil’ in the previous line (l. 5) – rather suggests til₃ ‘to live’.

7. ‘Irḫan is the Sumerian name of the western branch of the Euphrates ... (...) The deified stream Irḫan (...) is rare in the third millennium.’⁹² In this context (see also XIII 3), Irḫan most likely represents a branch of the Euphrates, rather than the god. The lines 7 ff. suggest that this branch supplied water so that the effect of the brackish water could be overcome.

⁹⁰ See also Mittermayer 2014.

⁹¹ Some examples: Figulla *et al.* (1996), CBT 2, BM 23438 line 2; Ozaki & Sigrist (2006), BPOA 1, no. 677, BM 106957, rev. 5; Volk (1995), *Inanna und Šukaletuda*, line 19; Kramer (1950), YBC 4621, obv. l. 9.

⁹² Wiggermann 1998-2001, § 1.2, 570-572.

Column XIII

2. an-še₃ ‘to heaven/the top’; the phrase gu₂-an-še₃ ‘total’ could only be attested in administrative texts.

3-5. The spelling A.KIB.NUN was interpreted as id₂-UD.KIB.NUN ‘the river Euphrates’. For Sippar can be found some analogous Early Dynastic writings: A.KIB.NUN^{ki} (OSP 1, 31 obv. I 3; TMH 5, 56 obv. I 4⁹³). The final *ge at buranun-ku₃ was copied by Alster and Westenholz, but not by Barton. The verbal form mu-DU, transcribed as mu-gub, is interpreted as a transitive form; gub ‘to stand’, in the transitive meaning ‘to do stand, to place’.

The interpretation of these lines may be that Enlil’s authority was restored, so that both rivers can convey again sufficient water. The staff placed on the mountain range is a metaphor for Enlil’s authority.

6-9. These lines may contain a metaphor based on that of the preceding lines, in which Enlil’s authority – represented as the pure staff of Enlil – was restored. The hoped-for results of this re-establishing of Enlil’s power is metaphorically presented as the deep longing for a new life, the beginning of a return to more prosperous circumstances. His staff is a young shoot which takes root; when it has become a tree, its branches may become standards. The wish goes further: the amar ‘a young’ and the laying of eggs are also expressions of a craving for a renewal of prosperity. If these lines are indeed coherent, then the verbal forms all may contain the modal prefix *hé/ha: e.g. for 7-8: he₂-me ‘may be/become’; a suggestion for the verbal form in the line 9 is: ha-ba-tag.

It is unlikely that in line 6 more signs are present than the transcribed ones. The remnant of the last sign may point to us₂. At first glance the lines 6-7 bear some resemblance to the lines 42-43, 85-86 and 129-130 of *Gilgameš, Enkidu and the Nether World* [ETCSL 1.8.1.4]: e.g. 42. ur₂-bi-a muš tu₆ nu-zu-e gud₃ im-ma-ni-ib-us₂ 43. pa-bi-a mušen anzud^{mušen}-de₃ amar im-ma-ni-ib-gar 42. ‘At its roots, a snake immune to incantations made itself a nest, 43. in its branches the Anzud bird settled its young.’ But with respect to the sign urin in the line 7 it is very unlikely that it refers to an eagle because no such attestation can be found.⁹⁴

Column XIV

3. As already supposed by Alster and Westenholz, the sign lu₂ in this and the other lines of this column most likely was used for lu ‘to be numerous, abundant’.⁹⁵

8. The second sign most likely is piriĝ. The designation PIRIĜ = nisku (ePSD; Akkadian *nisqu*) is used to give a description of the donkeys: ‘the best of’ (CAD N II, 272). LAK 173 = ka d₅ ‘to gather’ (among other things) (Steinkeller 1981-1982; Krebernik 1998, 275).

11. Probably DU₆.KAŠ₄ is an older form or a local form for DU₆.DU = ed₃/e₁₁.

⁹³ CDLI nos. P221583 and P020470.

⁹⁴ Veldhuis (2004, 284-285 ad šeš^{mušen}) demonstrated that the supposition that urin^{mušen} was another spelling for hu-ri₂-in^{mušen} is incorrect.

⁹⁵ See also Steinkeller 1984, 9 and note 21.

14. The copy of Alster and Westenholz shows *gi-za*, whereas Barton's copy suggests a probably more meaningful *zi-za*. Perhaps the full sentence may be like: *uz₃-zi-za* ^d*nin-ḥur-saḡ-<ḡa-ke₄> maš₂ mu-ni-in-šar₂-šar₂* 'In your fertile nanny goats Ninḥursaḡa made the kids numerous'.⁹⁶

Column XV

4-5. In line 4 it is mentioned that Ninḥursaḡa, who had left Keš (see XI 3-4), is brought back to Keš, probably by (the action of) Ninurta. From the next line one may conclude that it were singers who were proclaiming this news. Instead of a verb, there is a repetition of *gu₃-nar-ne* 'the voices of the singers'.

7. The verb *mud* can have several meanings, besides 'to create' also 'to be scared, afraid; to fear; to be worried' (the Old Babylonian lexical list *lu₂-azlag₂* B-C 1:87⁹⁷).

8. 'After they have laid down birds' may point to an offering for Ninḥursaḡa.⁹⁸ The verbal form must end with /eš/, otherwise the ending *be₂ cannot be explained: the relative past prefix /u/ – which here due to assimilation with the following *ba* became /a/ – 'is only found in perfective forms'.⁹⁹

9-10. For these lines, see PSD A I, 64b ad 2. Because of the ergative ending in ^{kuš}*a-ga₂-la₂-ke₄* and in ^{kuš}*um mu₃-ke₄* I suppose that in both words *lu₂* 'the man of...' at the head of these words was omitted.

11. The **e* after *Dabala* may be explained as the deictic *e*.

12. Because of the **ḡu₁₀* after *e₂*, I suppose that in this line and the following ones the thoughts (or spoken words) of *Dabala* are rendered. It is not clear where these thoughts or words of *Dabala* end. XV 6-7 and 12 ('my temple') suggest that *Dabala* is a temple official, perhaps the *sanga* mentioned in VII 7.

Column XVI

2. The word *eš₂-da* is not unlikely because of the context.

4. For *ba* 'to give', already in the Fara period, see Wilcke 1996, 15. Due to the context, the emendation <*niḡ₂->ba* is very probable.

⁹⁶ For *zi* 'fertile': see Vanstiphout 2003, 161 note 42. Compare e.g. with Gudea St. F col. IV 1-2: *u₈-zid-da sila₄-zi mu-ni-šar₂-šar₂* 'in fertile ewes he made fine lambs to multiply'; Gudea St. F col. IV 5-6: *uz₃-zid-da maš₂-zid mu-ni-šar₂-šar₂* 'in fertile goats he made fine kids to multiply'. In Gudea Cyl. B XV 6 we read: *u₈-zid-da sila₄ r du₃-du₃'-a-da* 'that fertile ewes are impregnated with lambs'. In *A Praise Poem of Šulgi* (Šulgi X; Klein 1981, 142-143), the lines 127-128 are: 127. *u₈-zid-da sila₄ mu-ni-in-šar₂-šar₂*^{ar} 128. *uz₃-zid-da maš₂ mu-ni-in-šar₂-šar₂*^{ar} '127. in the fertile ewes he (= Šulgi) made the lambs numerous, 128. in the fertile nanny goats he made the kids numerous.'

⁹⁷ *lu₂ al-mud = ga-al'[?]-tum*. Other lexical attestations for *mud* 'to be afraid' can be found in the lexical parts at the verbs *galātu* (CAD G, 12) and *palāḫu* (CAD P, 37-38). For a recent discussion of the list *lu₂-azlag₂*: Veldhuis 2014, ch. 4.1.2.3, esp. 163-166. Some other examples for *mud* 'to be afraid, to be worried': Cig and Kramer 1976, 415 and 417, line 4; Michalowski 2011, 249 and 250, l. 12.

⁹⁸ It may be that there is a special relation between Ninḥursaḡa and birds; see lines 75-77 of the Abū Šalābiḥ *za₃-mi₃* hymns (Biggs 1974, 48).

⁹⁹ Jagersma 2010, § 24.2.1, 517-518.

5. The *ga after šen is probably a mistake (due to the preceding ku₃-ga?).
6. lu₂-du₈ is present in the Early Dynastic List Names and Professions no. 94 (DCCLT). The meaning ‘to preserve, to collect’ may be derived from du₈ ‘to pile up; to accumulate’.
7. For nu-kiri₃-m[ah’]: see III 8.
8. ‘Our chief gardener kissing the gold’ may refer to the official mentioned in III 8, who is responsible for the libation or drinking ritual, at which apparently silver and golden plates were used.
9. Most likely šu-ne₂ is a mistake for šu-na (see also XVI 3).
11. In my opinion, the most relevant completion of the sign PI in this context is with the sign ħu: pi-ħu is a beer jar.¹⁰⁰ The lines 10-13 represent a libation ritual for Ninħursaġa.

Column XVII

1. The Barton copy suggests the following signs: gal ĤI/ŠAR₂ dug sur₃; the copy of Alster and Westenholz is less informative. Lines XVII 2-5 seem to repeat partly the lines XIII 3-5. If the last sign in this line 1 is indeed sur₃ ‘canal’, then this line may belong to the lines 2-5, all the more as this line does not end with a verbal form; it expresses that ‘the divine man’ (Irħan, the god of waterways?), except the two rivers, also restored some or all of the canals.
3. Because of the expression šeš-ġu₁₀ ‘my brother’, it is very likely that this sentence belongs to a direct speech of Ninħursaġa (see II 1-6). ‘The son’ in line 6 may refer to Ninurta.
12. In this line probably the word igi was omitted.

Column XVIII

3. One possible transcription of U₂ is kuš₃, but this word, just like u₂, seems to have no meaning in this sentence. One word with the sound /kuš/ that might have any sense is kuš₂ (o.a.) ‘to fall into disrepair [said of buildings]’ (CAD A II, 101 ad 3: kuš₂ = *anāħu*, in use from the Old Akkadian period onwards). Another possibility with sound value /kuš/, i.e. kuš₇ with the meaning ‘devastation’ (*naspantu*, CAD N II, 29), was only in use from the Old Babylonian period onwards. All other words with the sound value /kuš/ did not lead to an understandable sentence; moreover, the next line fits very well with mention of the devastation of the temple.
5. Maybe the expression gi₆...šu₄ has the same meaning as gi₆...sa₂ ‘to spend the night’, used in later periods.

¹⁰⁰ CAD P, 369-370 ad *pīħu*, lexical part.

Column XIX

2. For the god Ešpeš, who was at home in Adab, not in Keš: see Alster and Westenholz 1994, 37, and Such-Gutiérrez 2005/2006, 16.
5. The number of six doors is suggested by Barton's copy. Otherwise there were at least four doors (copy of Alster and Westenholz). The usual expression is $zu_2\dots kešda$, 'to bind'. Attinger mentioned the expression $šu-keše_2 AK$,¹⁰¹ a hapax which may mean 'faire une main liante contre; maîtriser'.
6. Probably E was written for e_3 (suggested by the context). My impression is that Ninḫursaġa left the city, therefore the translation 'She left'.
12. For $šaḫ-giš-gi$ 'wild boar': see Steinkeller 1995/1996, 213a.

Column XX

- 1/4. The beginning with u_4 is assumed because of the verb $za1$ in the lines XX 3 and 6.
- 3/6. Jagersma wrote that the 'change of /t/ to /r/ is first attested in the time of Gudea', when he discussed the alternating spelling between ta and ra , which occurred in the frequently attested expression $ba-ta/ra-za1$.¹⁰² In these lines of the Barton text it appears that the spelling with ra was used even earlier. Due to the context it is very unlikely that in these lines the prefix $bara$ – which usually 'expresses a categorical negation, meaning something like "certainly not" or "absolutely not" ' – was used.¹⁰³ In my opinion $me-na-m$ – usually written as $me-na-am_3$ 'when' – in these lines an additional meaning of 'why', expressing an exclamation of despair.
- 7/8. These lines represent the expression of what one wishes for the future: abundance of joy and happiness, just like plenty of $kurun$ -beer.
- 9-13. In my opinion it is here that the start of the building of a new temple complex is being described.
9. $ki-nam-nita$ could be found in *The Instructions of Šuruppak*. Alster commented:¹⁰⁴ 'That $ki.nam.nita(-ka)$, lit. "the place of manliness", refers to the battlefield appears from *Gilgames, Enkidu, and the Nether World*.
10. $muš-dam$ is a syllabic spelling for $mušdam$ (DIM_2) 'architect'.¹⁰⁵
11. The sign combination $\hat{G}\hat{I}\hat{S} : LAK 263 : MA : NUN$ is present in lexical lists, e.g. a list with several kinds of wood (Mittermayer 2005, 56; Steinkeller 1995, 697 no. 26). Steinkeller suggested identifying the signs MA and NUN as phonetic indicators. This special

¹⁰¹ Attinger 2005, 253 ad 5.466.

¹⁰² Jagersma 2010, 455.

¹⁰³ Jagersma 2010, 572, § 25.7.

¹⁰⁴ Alster 1974, 92. The line in question reads: $ki-nam-nitaḫ-a-ke_4 me_3-a nu-un-šub kur-re im-ma-an-dab_5$ 'He did not fall in battle on the field of manhood, the netherworld has seized him.'

¹⁰⁵ Borger 2010, 180 ad no. 686.

combination then may represent the Akkadian word *arwānu* ‘a tree and the aromatic substance obtained from it’ (CAD A II, 291a).

12. The sign TI is supposed to be written for /te/, which in turn may be an abbreviation for te-na ‘cold’.

13. As the lines 11 and 12 do not contain a verbal form, the DU in the line 13 may function as such, with the tentative transcription gub ‘to do stand, to place’. As from the line 10 appeared, an architect starts building something. The lines 11-13 may describe how this building was supplemented with various facilities.

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