

Ur-Namma B 71 – This praise-poem is a carefully constructed composition divided into two parts. First is a *sagidda*, mostly narrative, in which (a) Enlil chooses Ur-Namma to be king (1–6) and commissions him to build his temple E-kur (7–11), (b) Ur-Namma discharges this commission and provisions the temple’s cults (12–35), and (c) Enlil responds by determining for him a destiny of power (36–8). The second part, a *sangarra* that sings of Enlil’s special treatment of his appointed favourite as a succession of boons, is a mixture of direct speech and narrative. First are (d) the words Enlil utters to decree Ur-Namma’s destiny, in which the god blesses him for rebuilding Ekur and promises him renown (40–51). Then is a passage of narrative telling how (e) Enlil duly gave him victory in war (52–65) and confirmed him king on the “dais of kingship” in Ur (66–7). There follows a couplet in which (f) Ur-Namma, having acquired the aura and lordly attitude proper to the undisputed king of Sumer (68 sipa^dur-^dnamma-ke₄ ní bí-in-gùr-ru sag h́é-ni-in-íl lugal kalam-ma-[kam]), presents votive gifts to Enlil, evidently in Nippur, as homage to his divine master (69 ki lugal-a-ni^den-líl-lá-ka sag-e-eš h́é-[(ni-in)-rig₇]), perhaps from the spoils of war. Enlil’s response fills the concluding couplet, in which (g) he again pronounced Ur-Namma’s destiny (70–1). The narrative structure of the composition matches a common political reality in early Mesopotamia: a ruler’s rise to power is achieved through military success, and leads to recognition as king and a concomitant obligation to patronize the cult of Enlil at Nippur. The ideological expression of this reality is also clearly articulated in the composition: the ruler is chosen by Enlil to do good works, is shown favour as a reward, defeats his enemy in consequence, and is hailed by Enlil as king of Sumer. But it is not the purpose of this note to explore the poet’s artful weaving of reality and ideology, only to offer a new reading of the composition’s concluding line.

The last line of Ur-Nammu B (71) is badly damaged and has eluded full reconstruction, despite the attentions of more than the usual number of editors, translators and commentators. The latest edition, by Esther Flückiger-Hawker in her book on *Ur-Namma of Ur in Sumerian Literary Tradition* (OBO 166; Fribourg and Göttingen, 1999), sums up the current state of knowledge. The line is preserved on two manuscripts, one from Nippur (A = *SRT* 11), and another written in unorthographic Sumerian (B = *TCL* XV pl. 79 no. 38, new copy by A. Cavigneaux, *Acta Sum* 9 (1987) 60). Flückiger-Hawker presents their text of l. 71 as follows (p. 199):

A rev. 38	[gi]r ₁₇ -zal ur ₂ ^{ki} -ma ^d ur- ^d [namma...]
B rev. 2–3	gi-ir- za-[...] [...](-)ur nam-ḫi-i-a(-)[...]
	Delight in/of Ur [...] Ur[namma ...] in/of abundance [...].

The line attracted no comment in Flückiger-Hawker’s philological commentary. The ellipses in her translation indicate that she supposed quite a lot of the line to be lost in lacunae. In his edition of a decade earlier Jacob Klein filled the lacunae, but in translation only and with the italics of caution: “*Abundance* (and) prosperity in Ur [*he grants to*] Ur[nammu]” (Klein, *Acta Sum* 11 (1989) 53).

Reading the cuneiform of MS A (*SRT* 11), one sees that l. 71 is well spaced and not the work of a scribe faced with packing a long line on to the clay. That being so, the lacuna at its end can hardly hold more than [namma] and two or three more signs. MS B seems to have room for only one or two signs after nam-ḫi-i-a. This means that MS A's ^dur-^d[namma x (x) x] reports the same content as MS B's] ur nam ḫi i a [x (x)]. A reconstruction that is sensitive to considerations of space and language runs as follows:

A rev. 38 [gi]_{r17}-zal uri₂^{ki}-ma ^dur-^d[namma ḫé-àm]
 B rev. 2–3 gi-ir-za-[al / u₄-ri-ma] ur-nam ḫi i a-[am]
 Verily shall Ur-Nammu be Ur's pride and joy!

This is direct speech, i.e. Enlil's very words relating Ur-Namma's destiny, and as such the line is a fitting climax to a composition celebrating his kingship of Sumer. For gir₁₇.zal as an epithet of gods and heroes see Åke W. Sjöberg's article on "giri_x(=KA)-zal" in *ZA* 55 (1963) 1–10, esp. 7–8; the closest parallels to the present line, as read here, are Ninurta as šul gir₁₇-zal é-kur-ra "young hero, pride and joy of E-kur" in Ninurta B (*STVC* 34 ii 25), and Ningublag as gir₁₇-zal-maḫ úrim^{ki}-ke₄ "sublime joy of Ur" in a Gattung I incantation (E. Ebeling, *ArOr* 21 (1953) 374 ii 12–13).

A spelling ur-nam for Ur-Namma needs comment. Elsewhere in Ur-Namma B MS B writes the king's name as ur-^dna-na-ma-(k) (obv. 2' = 53, 5' = 56, 8' = 60, 14' = 68), once as ur-^dna-na-(k) (obv. 11' = 64). These unorthographic spellings were compared by Miguel Civil with another, úr-na-am-na-am-mi in the Šulgi inscription *TIM* IX 35: 4, and used as evidence for a derivation of the divine name Namma from *namnam (Civil, *Orientalia* 54 (1985) 27 fn. 1). Quite possibly this new spelling, ur-nam, is a mistake for *ur-na-nam or *ur-nam-nam. On the other hand, the Akkadian version of the name in the Šulgi text is simply *ur-na-am-ma* (*TIM* IX 35: 6), so perhaps ur-nam in Ur-Namma B is exactly as the scribe of MS B intended.

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