

# VEENHOF ANNIVERSARY VOLUME

STUDIES PRESENTED TO KLAAS R. VEENHOF ON THE OCCASION  
OF HIS SIXTY-FIFTH BIRTHDAY

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NEDERLANDS INSTITUUT VOOR HET NABIJE OOSTEN

2001

## ASSYRIAN UNIFORMS

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“The Pisidians carried little ox-hide shields and a pair of hunting-spears of Lycian workmanship, and wore bronze helmets, crested, and decorated with the ears and horns of an ox, also in bronze. Their legs were bound with strips of crimson cloth ... The Milyans carried short spears and had their clothes fastened with brooches; some of them were also armed with Lycian bows and wore leather casques.”<sup>1</sup> These are just two of the many and varied units which Herodotus tells us composed Xerxes’ army. Less than two centuries earlier the Neo-Assyrian army, as in most other empires of antiquity, not least the Persian and the Roman, included a similar variety of ethnic groups, each of which had its own weapons, dress, and fighting specialities.

While there are at least three substantial studies which address the representation of military and civilian personnel on the Neo-Assyrian palace reliefs,<sup>2</sup> there has been no comparable attempt by philologists to respond with a study of the textual data. With the advancing publication of the Helsinki State Archives of Assyria volumes the excuse that the state of the texts made them almost unusable is being rapidly eroded, and this short tribute to the guru of Assyrian textiles of an earlier age is only a first step on this road, since the wealth of information in the reliefs will merit further and deeper study. The Assyrian palace sculptures show a range of kit used by different military units. When trying to identify them it is tempting to concentrate on their weapons, which are readily differentiated and for which the Akkadian terms are mostly known. However, the dress and hairstyle of the different kinds of soldier are also significant, though much trickier to differentiate with confidence, and to match with the Assyrian terminology. We must try, though: the sculptors would have been aware of the implications of slight variations in formal and informal dress which may not be apparent to us today, and they are entitled to our respect. We must assume that recurring differences and similarities in the uniforms shown on the reliefs were deliberate, and we are obliged to find an account of the military which will be consonant with them.

I use the word “uniform” deliberately: with all the implications of standardization, formality, and identity that it carries, it is surely the right word. The choice of garment may of course be governed by practical considerations, reflecting the activities of the different units (e.g. whether or not they need to sit astride a horse), but particular styles spoke of group identity, and sometimes rested on a long tradition, since we see some uniforms persisting from the mid-9th century reliefs of Assur-našir-apli down into the 7th century. Of course, as in almost every army, dress could also mark out hierarchical differences<sup>3</sup>. Those who have commented on the representations of the

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<sup>1</sup> de Sélincourt 1954, 441-2 Book vii.76.

<sup>2</sup> In particular Hrouda 1965; Madhloom 1970; Reade 1972.

<sup>3</sup> Note that eunuchs and royal aides (*qurrubūtu*) had their distinctive garments in Neo-Babylonian times, to judge from Wiseman 1967, 496-7 ll. 16'-17'.



Fig. 1. Arslan Tash: soldier and officer (after Thureau-Dangin, *Arslan-Tash* Pl. X).

military in the reliefs have had no difficulty in distinguishing “officers” by observing the combination of their clothing and role in each scene. At its simplest note the distinction between officer and private on the reliefs from Arslan Tash (Fig. 1). Unfortunately the texts we have do not mention any garments specific to any particular rank, although one might expect to find such. One usage which does confirm the symbolic importance of uniform in general is reflected in passages which talk of soldiers being “clothed” (*labbušu*; regular NA pl. *labbašūte*, cf. GAG §15f).<sup>4</sup> SAA 11 29 r.3-5 mentions a cohort-commander “who has not been clothed” (*ša la labbušūni*), but SAA 11 122, a note of soldiers and horses, is the most explicit text.

6 *labbašūte* 208 *ša UD.MEŠ*

8 *labbašūte* 96 *ša UD.MEŠ*

PAB 14 *labbašūte* 304 *ša UD.MEŠ*

PAB 214 *ša PN<sub>1</sub> našanni*

PAB 104 *ša PN<sub>2</sub> našanni*

PAB 318 LÚ.ERÍN.MEŠ 177 KUR.MEŠ

Although laconic, the text’s mention of horses confirms the military context, and the small numbers and prior listing of the “clothed” soldiers suggest that they were in authority, if not technically officers. In the royal annals kings talk of the “clothing” of visiting dignitaries as a form of honour, along with the presentation of rings and torcs; the slightly different usage in these administrative documents must imply that becoming “clothed” (*labbušu*) was a formal procedure signifying, and thereafter attesting to, the acquisition of status. The term *ša UD.MEŠ* for the remaining troops is difficult, but since the contrast is presumably between officially uniformed and less

<sup>4</sup> For “uniformed rein-holders” (*mukil appâte lab-ba-šū-te*) cf. Kinnier Wilson 1972, 144 (No. 16:14), though I fail to understand the significance of the opposition to *ša mu-gir-a-te* (if that is indeed the correct interpretation).

definitively enrolled troops, I suspect that these are “day” troops serving out their time as conscripts.<sup>5</sup>

Because of the need for standardization, and perhaps because of the economic circumstances of the ordinary soldier, the manufacture or at least the supply of uniforms would normally be a concern of the military administration. Some of the clearest evidence for this comes in fact from as far back as the 13th century, and since other features of the Neo-Assyrian army can be traced back into the 2nd millennium, it can do no harm to examine the evidence of the Middle Assyrian texts first. Two tablets, both perhaps originating from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, are especially pertinent: VAT 18045 (Freydank 1994, No. 5; Ass. 14466, not listed in Pedersén), and MAH 16086 which must also derive from the German excavations though it somehow found its way to Geneva.

As noted by Freydank (1994, p. 9), both texts list a similar range of clothing and other items, but before considering the terminology in detail, let us try to reconstruct the administrative context into which these documents must be fitted. VAT 18045 is divided into sections listing small numbers of garments and a quantity of wool, next to the name or title of a woman, including in one case the “chief of the female weavers” (GAL MÍ.UŠ.BAR.MEŠ). The final section states GIŠ.GÀR.MEŠ (= *iškārāte*) *ša ab-ba-še ša lime* PN “work quotas of the ... for the eponymate of Ber-[...]” (l. 40’). This could be a list of delivered items, but since the tablet itself is probably dated to the same *limmu* (the name in l. 42’ also begins Ber-[ ]), it seems more likely that they are the projected quotas required of each woman. The word *abbāšu* is not yet well understood, but is possibly some kind of textile-worker.<sup>6</sup>

MAH 16806 is different. Here each section of the text concludes with the name of a person or “house”; because of damage to the tablet their role is usually unclear, but if we can be guided by the verb *iddunu* “they shall give” at the end of A.i.11 they are mentioned as contributors of the garments listed, which are thus being transferred from the private sector into the hands of the state administration. Working out the relationship between these contributions and the work quotas of the female weavers is beyond the scope of this article. One possibility might be that the weavers are producing the clothes within the central administration, while the contributors in MAH 16806 are required to organize their own production and supply finished products. Alternatively, since Freydank has restored the name Marduk-tabni-šuklil in both VAT 18045, 41’ and MAH 16806 A.ii.4, it is possible that the Berlin tablet gave a detailed breakdown of this person’s production

<sup>5</sup> Compare, in the context of *ilku* service, *īma ina libbi* UD.MEŠ-ia ..... *imaḥḥarranni* “Now during my period of service he receives from me ...” (ND 3467, see Postgate 1974, 399).

<sup>6</sup> It turns up otherwise in the Geneva text (MAH 16086), but in the unhelpful phrase *Á.MEŠ ša ab-ba-še* (A.i.2), where the broken text and the ambiguity of the logogram *Á* obscure the meaning, and in the Assyrian coronation ritual which is even less enlightening. One possibility is that we have here the nomen professionis from a verb describing textile manufacture whose existence has always been rather shadowy because it gets absorbed in the common verb *epēšu*. Discussions of it can be found in Landsberger, *AfO Beiheft* 17, 24 (with fn. 70-71) and in Durand, *ARM* 26/i, no. 57 note (b). It is perhaps to be recognized in the other Geneva text concerned with textiles, MAH 15854, whose sections end typically *n MA.NA SÍG.MEŠ TA.A.AN UB-BU-ša* “each (of these textiles) ...ed with n minas apiece”. This phrase reminds us of the MB stative *up-pu-us* (or *ub-bu-us*) listed in Aro 1970, 34, where the context suggests some meaning like “interwoven with” or “decorated with”, but even if these are all the same word referring to textile manufacture, I prefer to leave unresolved whether it is a specialist usage of the common verb *epēšu*, or a separate lemma (as the *b* in *abbāšu* and the MB sibilant might suggest).

quota, which was summarized along with others' in one section of the Geneva text (though the two did not necessarily apply to the same time period).

Here however we must concentrate on the products themselves, some of which from their descriptions were intended for military use (as indeed all may have been). The items most regularly listed by MAH 16086 are:

<i>lippu</i> (+ É.Ĥ.I.A) <i>ša birme</i>	" <i>lippu</i> ," (sometimes with "houses" <sup>7</sup> ), "with coloured trim"
<i>naḥlaptu</i> ( <i>ša birme</i> ) <i>šanā<sup>2</sup>itu</i>	"coat," (sometimes "with coloured trim,") "2nd class"
<i>naḥlaptu ša dikāti ša<sup>2</sup>uptu qatattu</i>	"coat, for battles, embroidered, fine"
( <i>šubātu</i> ) <i>ša tusaḥḥuri ša dikāti mašru</i>	"(cloth) for winding, for battles, teaselled"
( <i>šubātu</i> ) <i>ša tusaḥḥuri adi sūni-šu ša</i>	"(cloth) for winding, with its fringe <sup>?</sup> , everyday?"
UD.MEŠ	
<i>kusītu ša šāb šarri</i>	"robe of king's troops"

These items, like others mentioned in the text, pose numerous problems of interpretation and translation, only a few of which can be addressed below.

### *lippu*

The identity of this item is not known. My transcription follows the most recent discussion of the term by Donbaz (1991, 79)<sup>8</sup> and implies a connection with *lapāpu* "to wrap". The CAD (L 200) conflates a NA word *li-ip-pu* with the word *lippu* found in medical texts and translated by them as a wad or tampon. However, that meaning is inappropriate here, and if correctly reconstructed the *pirsum* formation *lippum* may need to be kept separate from the *parsum* formation *lappum*. On the other hand we should note that the scribes do not write the *p* double, and a connection with *lawūm* "to surround" cannot be ruled out.<sup>9</sup> Etymology is not specially helpful therefore in identifying this item, and the only indications we have are that they are usually (including VS 19 24 and Donbaz 1991, though not in Freydank 1994 No. 5) designated as *ša birme* "with coloured trim", and that they can be manufactured as part of an annual *iškāru* arrangement.

More enigmatic is the phrase *ša kī lē<sup>2</sup>i ša PN* "as on the writing-board of PN".<sup>10</sup> The equivalent phrase in VAT 18045 has "in accordance with the writing-board of the palace" (*ša pī lē<sup>2</sup>i ša ekalli*). At first sight, this might seem to refer to the writing-boards named after either the king or one of four to five high officials which are mentioned in contemporary 13th century texts in contexts which make it clear they were lists of Assyrians recruited to serve in the army. However, in these textile lists the phrase is tightly associated with the particular garment called *lippu/libu*, not with the soldiers. The "translation" should run e.g. "4 *lippu* garments (and) 6 'houses', with

<sup>7</sup> The items written É.Ĥ.I.A remain completely obscure to me, unless it is a writing for the textile item *ša bētāte*; they appear to be closely associated with the *lippu*.

<sup>8</sup> The passage in question reads 5 TÚG li-BU *ša bir-me ištu lubultu(!) ša tupnini ša Kilizi šelu<sup>2</sup>atanni ana FPN tadnu* GIŠ.GÀR *ša<sup>um</sup> Ikkib-Marduk ša limme PN* "5 *lippu/libu* textiles with coloured trim were given to FPN when the clothing of the chest of Kilizi was brought up. *Iškāru*-quota of the town of Ikkib-Marduk, for the eponymate of PN"

<sup>9</sup> As suggested in Postgate 1979, 98.

<sup>10</sup> The correct reading of *lē<sup>2</sup>u* here was recognized by Freydank 1994, p. 9.

coloured trim, which are in accordance with the writing-board of Ušur-namkur-šarri, cohort(?; *gildu*) which is with Aššur-tukulti-kēni” (A.ii.6). It seems to show that the precise specification for these items was recorded on a writing-board, and since the number is already specified, it would seem that different clients (whether a highly placed individual or the palace itself) had different specifications. It is tempting to suggest, therefore, that the designs, or perhaps specifically the decorations, of these coloured items distinguished one sector of the army from another. Whatever they were, the designation *lippu/līpu* does not reappear in the 1st millennium.

### *naḥlaptu*

CAD N/i 138a “wrap, outer garment”; *AHw* 715a “Gewand, Mantel”. Two versions of this piece of clothing are listed in MAH 16806:

<i>naḥlaptu (ša birme) šanā<sup>2</sup>tu</i>	“coat” (sometimes “with coloured trim”), “2nd class”
<i>naḥlaptu ša dīkāti ša<sup>2</sup>uptu qatattu</i>	“coat, for battles, embroidered, fine”.

In the British army “battle dress” is tougher and more smartly cut than everyday wear, and it seems as though much the same was true for the Middle Assyrian soldier. One MA context (*KAJ* 77, 9) offers the writing *na-ḥa-ÁB-tu*; I have dithered as to how this should be read (e.g. Postgate 1988, 127) but in the light of MAH 16806 the following adjective *šanā<sup>2</sup>tu* favours the CAD’s suggestion that *naḥlaptu* is meant here too.<sup>11</sup> However, rather than restore a missing <la> we should assume that the word was actually pronounced without it, since in *SAA* 7, 112 r.1 and 115.ii.18 Parpola has recognized a Neo-Assyrian form *naḥlaptu* used with reference to Qurraean uniform.

Elsewhere in Neo-Assyrian texts the word is rather uncommon, and it may well not be coincidental that in *ABL* 473 the writer is explicitly describing non-Assyrian troops<sup>12</sup>, but in the Neo-Babylonian textile documents discussed by Matsushima 1995 it appears frequently in the dress of statues of goddesses along with *kusītu* (see Salonen 1980, 143 for examples). The same association seems to be present already in our Middle Assyrian Aššur lists, but as with other instances of garments listed together, it is hard to know whether they were worn regularly together, or were alternatives to each other. Matsushima notes that the *naḥlaptu* is of wool, but lighter and used in greater numbers than the *kusītu* (on which see below). She suggests that it “must be a light and auxiliary garment”, perhaps “a shawl or the like, just to cover the shoulder” (1995, 246-8). In the 2nd millennium it could be either of linen (at Nuzi and Aššur) or of coloured wool (Nuzi, Babylonia and Aššur). MAH 16806 tells us further that they were worn in battle, and decorated. Against seeing it as a simple shawl is the detail in VAT 18045 that, in addition to 9 minas for the main garment, 2/3 mina of purple wool was allocated for the sleeves (*aḥātu*, wr. Á.MEŠ) and “fronts” (GAB.MEŠ). Hence I have opted to translate “coat”, rather than use the word “cloak”, which is normally thought of as sleeveless in English.

<sup>11</sup> Note the corresponding Nuzi term for “second-class” *šinaḥīlu* applied to a *naḥlaptu* in *HSS* 14, 523 cited CAD N/i, 139b.

<sup>12</sup> In the Babylonian tribute(?) list edited in Wiseman 1967, 5000 *naḥlaptu bir-mu* are listed immediately before leather shields, and may therefore have been intended for military use.

*kusītu*

CAD K 585 “(an elaborate garment)”; AHW 514 “Gewand”; SAA “robe”. This garment is well attested in both Assyrian and Babylonian contexts, although when the CAD entry was compiled there were no Middle Assyrian attestations. In MAH 16086 the phrase *ša ERÍN.MEŠ LUGAL* does not apply to all the garments in a section, but must be a specific qualification of the *kusītu*. Hence the preferable interpretation of the phrases concluding sections in MAH 16086 is “5 king’s-troops-*kusītu*-garments PN [shall give?]”. In other words, some, though not all, *kusītus* were specified as uniform for the king’s troops. VAT 18045 gives confirmation that this item was made of wool, to judge from the context, and produced as part of their *iškāru* work by women; there are virtually no other mentions of *kusītu* in Middle Assyrian.

We have no usable representations of Middle Assyrian uniforms, though a clue to the possibilities might be taken from Egyptian representations of Asiatic soldiers: long mail-clad robes are shown in the grave of Rameses III, and with blue trimmings among gifts to the pharaoh in the tomb of Ken-Amun at Thebes.<sup>13</sup> A charioteer wearing a similar long robe features in Thutmose IV’s battle against the Syrians, but others wear a long elaborately decorated cloth robe, and archers have a short coat of mail over this.<sup>14</sup> To try to achieve a more precise identification we must turn to the 1st millennium evidence, both written and carved. One source is the group of textile labels and related lists found on Kouyunjik (SAA 7 95-109), perhaps of the early 7th century.<sup>15</sup> These labels were sealed, and some list large numbers of items (833 woollen textiles in SAA 7 108); they gave a whole range of information about the number, colour, fabric, shape, and weight of the items they list. Unfortunately the scribe’s space-saving fondness for the ditto sign means that they are not always transparent, a typical translation of one of the entries being: “ditto ditto ditto ditto, textile, ..., knotted, 1 1/2”. However, they plainly are the product of an office involved in the provision of clothing for government servants, and given their provenance (from the royal palaces, not from the Review Palace on Nebi Yunus), these are likely to have been personnel in the service of the king himself. Some of the types of garment listed are known to have been worn by soldiers, while others are probably not military wear, although this would not preclude their wearers’ being members of the military establishment, which was expanded in the 7th century to embrace civilian professions.

In the Neo-Babylonian texts the *kusītu* are of wool and always seem to be worn by goddesses (Salonen 1980; Matsushima 1995, 234). They are mentioned in Neo-Assyrian religious texts as the dress of a deity (Dumuzi and Šakkan), but also turn up in other contexts which makes it clear that they could be worn by soldiers and officials. They are listed occasionally in the textile labels, where they may be qualified as “with coloured trim” (GÜN SAA 7.99) or “red ...” (SA<sub>5</sub> KUR SAA 7 105.6’-7’).<sup>16</sup> As an honorific form of dress they are also encountered among the funerary gifts for a royal burial (MacGinnis 1987), and in ABL 473 where eunuchs are said to be “clothed with

<sup>13</sup> Wolf 1926, 96-7, Abb. 67, 69; N. de G. Davies, *The Tomb of Ken-Amun at Thebes, I* (N.Y. 1930) Pl. XVI and in colour on Pl. XXIX. My thanks to Barry Kemp for steering me to these Egyptian representations; also illustrated Yadin 1963, 196-7.

<sup>14</sup> W. Wreszinski, *Atlas zur altägyptischen Kulturgeschichte II*, Taf. 1.

<sup>15</sup> For these labels see SAA 7, pp. xxvi-xxix. The two dated (but not typical) sealings Nos. 93 and 94 come from 681 and 658 B.C.

<sup>16</sup> Perhaps this should be “red (and) blue”, if, by analogy with SA<sub>5</sub>, KUR in these textile labels can be taken as an abbreviation for ŠfG.ZA.GÌN.KUR.RA = *takītu*.

*kusītu* robes and adorned with rings”, plainly in imitation of court ceremony. As in Babylonia, the robes were made of wool in Assyria since in *ABL* 413, when the king enquires whence some *kusītu* robes are to be provided, the reply comes that the people in question will be given purple wool (SÍG SA<sub>5</sub>, perhaps for SÍG.ZA.GÌN.SA<sub>5</sub> = *argamannu*) and they will have them made themselves, with the assistance of weavers from Arbil.

To identify this garment does not seem very difficult. Goddesses were represented in 1st millennium seals wearing long flounced robes (e.g. Teissier 1984, No. 217). If we look in the Neo-Assyrian sculptures too, we can identify individuals who wear long robes falling straight to the ground. The king himself wears an elaborately decorated one when in battle, and it is normal wear for high ranking civil and military personages (e.g. Fig. 2). The Arslan Tash reliefs (Fig. 1) give the simplest opposition between the officer in a long robe and his soldiers, but the same distinction is present in many scenes of battle and ceremony. This robe, or gown (Hrouda: *langes Hemd*) must be the *kusītu*.

Often the robe is worn on its own, but it can be worn with a garment over it. The eunuch archer probably wears a robe with a tasselled hem underneath a mail shirt (e.g. Fig. 3).<sup>17</sup> A fringed shawl is sometimes worn over it. In formal dress this may reach from the shoulders to the feet (see Hrouda 1965 Taf. 2; Assur-našir-apli II), or be wrapped round the waist so that the lower



Fig. 2. Assyrian wearing a *kusītu* under a shawl (Sennacherib: after Barnett et al. 1998, 659a).

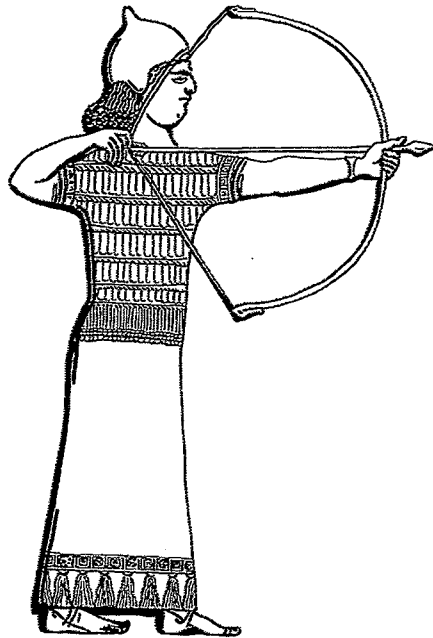


Fig. 3. Eunuch archer in mail-shirt over robe at the capture of Ekron (Sargon: after Albenda 1986, Pl. 136).

<sup>17</sup> Frequent in Sargon battle scenes; similarly Tiglath-pileser III, with broad belt at waist, Barnett & Falkner 1962, Pl. LXXXIII.



part of the robe is left free and the fringe encircles the legs horizontally and is then slung diagonally across the upper body (e.g. Fig. 4).<sup>18</sup> In these cases as it crosses the chest the extra garment seems to be more fringe than shawl, either because it has become more of a sash than a shawl, or because the cloth has been rolled up for its upper part.

If we seek for an Akkadian term perhaps we may find it in *SAA* 7, 112, 6' where someone "has given upper garments and robes" (TÚG.AN.TA.MEŠ TÚG.BAR.DIB.MEŠ); the item translated "upper garment", *el(ēn)ītu*,<sup>19</sup> could presumably be such a shawl. It is attested several times in the textile labels, once specified as "purple" (SA<sub>5</sub>), and two black ones are included in a list of items supplied to Urartian emissaries (*SAA* 7, 127). There is a problem with the literal interpretation of the term, in that it is unclear whether "upper" means "for the upper part of the body" or "outer". I am inclined to take it as "outer", hence an "overgarment", in opposition to the "undergarment" (*šupālitu*, see below). This would also permit identification with the shawl, but this must remain no more than a guess for the time being.<sup>20</sup>



Fig. 4. Fringed shawl draped over upper body (Sargon: after Albenda 1986, Pl. 86).

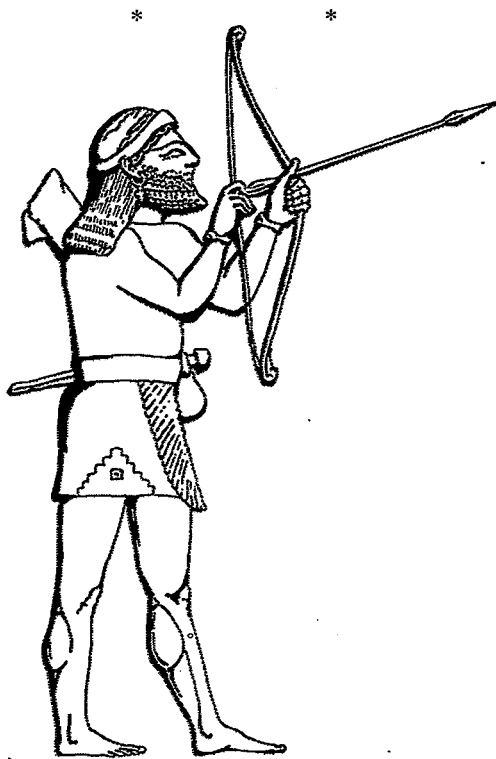


Fig. 5. Auxiliary archer in short kilt showing fringed edge (Sargon: after Albenda 1986, Pl. 98).

<sup>18</sup> So also Hrouda 1965 Taf. 49.2 (Arslan Tash); Houston 1954, 149 Fig. 147; Parrot 1961, Fig. 112 (Til-Barsip).

<sup>19</sup> No definite equivalent is known, but in the light of the NB syllabic writing TÚG *e-le-ni-tum* (CAD E 83 s.v. *elēnītu* B) the longer form is probably correct.

<sup>20</sup> For a different suggestion for the identification of the shawl, see above under *nahlaptu*.

While officers and officials retained the traditional robe (*kusītu*), with or without a shawl, it is obvious from the reliefs that the ordinary soldier's uniform was quite different. Unfortunately, determining the precise nature of even these commonest items of dress is less easy than it might seem at first sight. Since our texts are principally late 8th and early 7th century, for our comparisons we need to concentrate on the relief corpus from the reigns of Sargon and Sennacherib.

*Kilts (Hrouda: Schurzrock)*

The easiest garment to define is the kilt, which can be worn alone, and is essentially a rectangular piece of cloth wrapped around the waist. Short kilts, evidently formed like this and with a decorated fringe falling below the hem-line, are already shown at Boğazköy and in Egyptian paintings of Aegean emissaries of the 2nd millennium (see Barber 1990, 337 Fig. 15.20 and 15.18-19) and on the 9th century Tell Halaf reliefs (Madhloom 1970, 89 with Pl. XLVIII.2). In Assyria too there are short kilts, often worn without any clothing on the upper body, from the 9th century at latest. Both the short versions of the Aramaean and other auxiliaries (Fig. 5), and the slightly longer kilts worn by Assyrians have the fringed outer edge positioned at the wearer's right side, and with the Assyrian kilts the long tassels forming a fringe hang down below the hem. This is clearly shown in the Arslan Tash procession (Figs. 1 and 6; and countless other instances), where those soldiers moving to our right, and thus exposing their right side to the viewer, show the



Fig. 6. Arslan Tash: soldier moving to left (after Thureau-Dangin, *Arslan-Tash* Pl. IX).

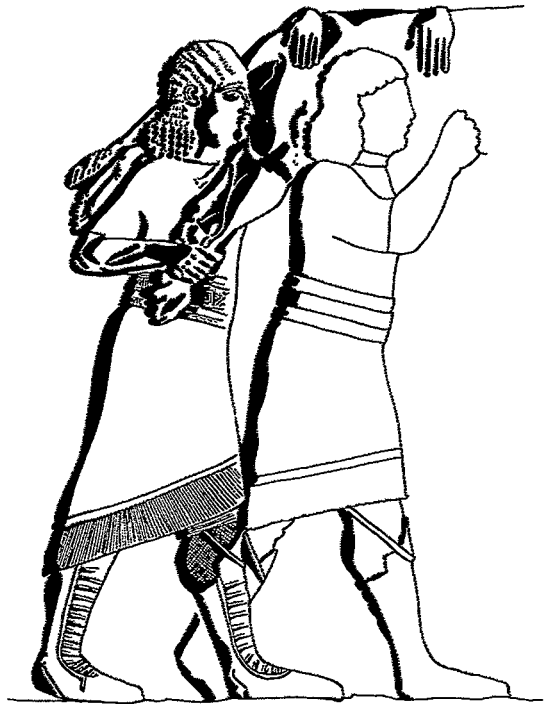


Fig. 7. Work tunic worn by servants (Assurbanipal, after Barnett 1976, Pl. XLIII).

tasselled fringe falling vertically down from the waist-band, while with those moving in the opposite direction and showing their left side to the viewer we can only see the extremity of the fringe as it appears below the hem on the far side.

*Tunics (Hrouda: kurzes Hemd) and shirts (Bluse)*

The word “tunic” means different things to different writers. I am using it to mean a close-fitting tailored garment on the upper body, reaching to the wearer’s knees or somewhat higher. It differs from a shirt in that it drops below the waist, and from the robe in being shorter. Such a garment is frequently shown on the reliefs (see Fig. 7). Its characteristics are that it is close fitting, with short tight sleeves ending above the elbow, and a plain or sometimes fringed horizontal hem, usually above the knee. Some version of the tunic is worn by a wide variety of people, with or without a belt. Menial tasks, whether military or civilian, are often performed by men wearing this garment alone: by the foreign (Aramaean?) labourers, with a belt of some kind at the waist (Barnett et al. 1998 Fig. 536a); by grooms (ibid. Fig. 584) and by hunt attendants (e.g. Fig. 7; cf. Madhloom 1970, 71). Horse-riders often have a longish version which is cut on a slant rising towards the front to expose the knees (e.g. Barnett 1976, Pl. L; note that the slant is equally present when the rider is dismounted). Even the king himself wears an elaborate version of the same garment. Over it both cavalry and infantry often wear a mail-shirt, usually sleeveless (see Fig. 8; military scribes in Barnett et al. 1998 Pl. 252), or, in the case of helmeted auxiliaries, under the crossed straps attached to a wide belt shown in Fig. 9.



Fig. 8. Mail-shirt over tunic (Sennacherib: after Barnett et al. 1998, Pl. 55).



Fig. 9. Auxiliary spearman, crossed straps over tunic (Sargon: after Albenda 1986, Pl. 96).

In many cases it is impossible to be certain whether we are looking a single knee-length garment, or a separate shirt and kilt. As Hrouda comments “Über die Verbindung von Rock und Bluse geben die Darstellungen keine Auskünfte, weil die “Nahtstellen” immer durch den Gürtel verdeckt werden” (1965, 25). In other cases the waist area is concealed by the base of a mailshirt. Because kilts usually have a pendent fringe, and always show their fore-edge when the wearer is moving to the right, we are probably entitled to assume a tunic is intended if there is a straight hem-line without a pendent fringe, and certainly when the right side of the body is shown without the fore-edge of a kilt (e.g. Barnett et al. 1998 Fig. 645a, bottom right; Madhloom 1970, Pl. XLVI.3).

But may we assume conversely that if there is a pendent fringe the garment can only be a kilt starting from the waist, and any clothing on the upper body a separate shirt? Perhaps not. On the one hand, one must, I think, agree with Hrouda 1965, 25, that it is hard to imagine a single garment which combined a close-fitting sleeved upper part like a shirt with a wrapped and fringed lower part like a kilt. So where we see a kilted figure with pendent fringe and a sleeved upper garment, as in Figs. 1 and 7 (Arslan Tash) we must assume he is wearing a waist-length shirt (Bluse). On the other hand, we cannot always be sure the fringe belongs to a kilt. Assyrian soldiers in the late 8th and 7th century often show a pendent fringe which is not formed from the vertical fore-edge of a kilt, as in the Arslan Tash examples, but seems to fall straight from the waist-band after having been pulled diagonally up across the right hip (e.g. Fig. 10; or the slingers shown in Barnett et al. 1998, Fig. 516).

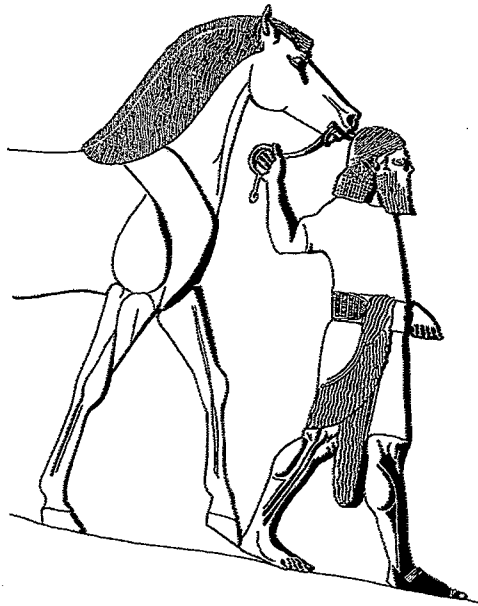


Fig. 10. Fringe falling from waist-band  
(Sennacherib: after Barnett et al. 1998, 584).  
Albenda 1986, Pl. 96).

In some Sennacherib scenes this feature may distinguish a superior rank (ibid. Fig. 370a, the leading spearman in the middle register). In others it differentiates two classes of spearmen: in Fig. 348b those with pointed helmets have a pendent fringe, but not those with crests, although their skirts look virtually identical. With Houston 1954, 138-9, I suspect that the fringe belongs to a "small wrap-around shawl" worn over a knee-length tunic. Thus from the reign of Sargon the rabbit-hunter in Albenda 1986 Pl. 85 is wearing a typical Assyrian kilt, and presumably above this a shirt, but the officer on the bottom right of Pl. 87 will be wearing a tunic with a fringed shawl draped round it. It is admittedly difficult always to be sure of this distinction, and Hrouda sees this style rather as a development of the "Zipfelschurzrock" (1965, 32, with Taf. 44, 3).

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To sum up, the evidence of the reliefs suggests that in addition to the robe (*kusītu*) items of military clothing we should expect to encounter regularly in administrative texts are (1) the kilt; (2) the knee-length tunic (3) the shirt; and (4) the mail-shirt or corslet. If we can securely identify some or all of these, some progress will have been made. TH No. 48 is an administrative list of the late 9th or early 8th century from the provincial capital of Guzana. After "1 chariot, 4 horses and 2 donkeys" it enumerates weapons: "10 bows, 10 daggers, 10 spears, 10 helmets, 10 quivers, 10 shields". This is followed by "10 *gulēnu*, 10 *KUŠ.me-[x-x]*, 10 *sāgu*". Ignoring the leather item for the time being, it is obvious that at least the *gulēnu* and the *sāgu* were components of infantry uniform. They are associated also in later contexts of the late 8th and early 7th century. In a list of allocations to palace personnel the palace supervisor (*ša pān ekalli*) and his scribe each receive 6 *gulēnu*, 4 *sāgu*, a pair of saddle-bags(?), a sheep and a bowl of wine (SAA 11, 36.ii.13). Since the palace supervisor himself also receives a pair of donkeys, it seems likely that these items of clothing were intended for their more humble and unlisted employees involved in the physical task of transporting the palace supplies. What is not of course stated is whether they were worn together, or are alternatives. Let us examine the evidence for each term more closely.

### *sāgu*

CAD S, 27-8 "(a piece of clothing)"; AHw 1003a "ein Arbeitsschurz?"; SAA "sash"; SAA 7 p. xxix "loin-cloth". We can certainly come a bit closer than CAD, because both lexically and elsewhere there is a clear connection between *sāgu* and the waist or hips (*qablu*). This is tacitly acknowledged in the following article (*sāgu* in *ša sīgāte-šu*, p. 28) where CAD translates "belt(?) peddler". In Middle Assyrian texts, apart from the harem edict passage, cited by both dictionaries, which reveals that the *sāgu* would have been "tied" (*rakāsu*), it is found in two lists of miscellaneous items along with containers (e.g. *kukubu* pots and *naruqqu* sacks, VS 19 7:18 and VS 19 29:21). This suggests that it may be an Assyrian variant of the Babylonian *saqqu(m)* (CAD S 168-9, which also means both a sack and a type of cloth.<sup>21</sup>

In Neo-Assyrian texts where the word is given a determinative it is TÚG, so that it was of textile not leather. The Neo-Assyrian passages cited in the CAD article make it plain that this was a very basic item of equipment, often issued along with water-skins.<sup>22</sup> There was a profession

<sup>21</sup> The one possible Ugarit passage is very doubtful, according to van Soldt, *Orientalia* NS 60 (1991), p. 117.

<sup>22</sup> *Sāgu* are mentioned along with *himtu* "water-skins" at Tell Halaf (no. 52:11) and in NL 25 (*Iraq* 18, 1956, 41). In later texts *sāgu* are similarly listed together with *ma(z)zā<sup>2</sup>u* (see simply CAD S 27b; the

devoted to its manufacture or supply (*CAD* S p. 28, cf. above). Discounting the possibility that it was merely a loin-cloth worn out of sight, two options may be considered (1) with *SAA*, a textile belt or “sash” worn round the waist or (2) a garment worn round the hips (so *AHw*). There is indeed a broad cummerbund or girdle worn round the waist with a variety of garments (Hrouda 1965, 47-8 with Taf. 7.13-24; in red and blue in Parrot 1961 p. XVII and Fig. 347). This is clearly some form of textile, although it may have incorporated a narrower leather belt, and it is so common that it must be mentioned somewhere in our sources. However, a better candidate than *sāgu* for this is *šipirtu* (see *CAD* Š 201 “(a sash woven or treated in a special technique)”; *AHw* 1103b “Band oder Schärpe aus Textilgeflecht ?”). On the grounds, therefore, that it refers to a commonly worn garment worn round the hips, I would propose *sāgu* as the best candidate for the “kilt”, always leaving open the possibility that special types of kilt had names of their own.

### *gulēnu*

*SAA* “cloak”; *CAD* G, 127 “(a coat)”; *CAD* S 27 “cloak”; *AHw* “ein Obergewand”. *Gulēnu* is a 1st millennium word. The possibly cognate Aramaic word *glīmā* is a garment worn across the shoulders, as can be seen from a (much later!) Genizah marriage document which refers to all someone’s property “even from the shirt off his back”.<sup>23</sup> From the Practical Vocabulary of Assur 247 we learn that the *gulēnu* might have red ZAG.MEŠ; unfortunately the correct reading and meaning of ZAG in this context are still unknown (see *SAA* 7 p. xxviii for the reading *pūtu* “front-piece”, but this is only a guess). *SAA* 7 96:4’ mentions 45 *gulēnu*; in the following line we have 2, perhaps with a red “front-piece” (ZAG SA<sub>5</sub>; so also in Nos. 98:8’ and 107.r.8’), followed by 30 “old” ones. Note too that ladies might also have a *gulēnu* (Parker 1954, 37:35). Further confirmation of *gulēnu* as one of the basic pieces of uniform comes from *SAA* 1 193 (=ABL 642) a letter attributed on the basis of scribal ductus to an official at Carchemish called Nabu-pašir. He replies to the king’s request for an issue of uniforms to foreign troops apparently stationed or detained: he has sent 200 *gulēnu* to men of At[...] in one city [name lost], and 200 to the troops of PN who are in Til-Barsip, and 700, apparently, to some other destination. We cannot say that these were exclusively for military use, but in such numbers they must have been a standard item of apparel.

Much the most explicit attempt to identify the *gulēnu* is Weidner’s: “Es dürfte sich um das bis zu den Knien reichende, kurzärmelige Gewand handeln, das an den Hüften von einem doppelten Gürtel zusammengehalten wird und über den der Bogenschütze mitunter das Brustkoller trägt.” (*Afo Beiheft* 6, 34). This garment is the “tunic”, as defined above,<sup>24</sup> and certainly remains a strong candidate for the *gulēnu*. However, there does not seem to me to be any decisive reason why it should be a tunic rather than a shirt. Indeed, if we suppose that the soldiers in the *TH* 48 and the officials in *SAA* 11 36 are unlikely to have been issued with two different outfits, then a better solution would be to translate *gulēnu* as “shirt”, to go with *sāgu* “kilt”. Otherwise we would have to suppose they received both a tunic and a kilt to be worn as alternatives, but no shirt. This is

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correct restoration of *TH* 48:11 KUŠ *me-*[ remains doubtful) and I guess this is also a (new?) word for “water skin”. It is perhaps literally a “squeezer”.

<sup>23</sup> *mglym*’ *d’l ktyyh* (Friedman 1980, II, p. 124-7 l. 20; my thanks to Geoffrey Khan for steering me to this passage).

<sup>24</sup> As a modern English translation, neither “cloak” nor “coat” is really suitable, since both are outer garments worn off the shoulders, either short or full length. The difference is that a coat has sleeves, whereas a cloak at the most has armholes and is worn much more loosely.

also possible, of course, since soldiers clad in just a kilt are not uncommonly shown on the reliefs.

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A rather more varied military wardrobe is recorded by a Nineveh text, SAA 11 28, which lists contributions for a soldier performing *ilku* service. The clothing section of the list reads:

- 11 TÚG.KI.TA *hal-lu-up-tú* TÚG.gul-IGI(=*inu*)  
 12 TÚG.SAGŠU TÚG.*ši-pir-tú*  
 13 [TÚG].*ur-nu-tú* 6 MA.NA SÍG.MEŠ  
 14 [x x TÚ]G.*sa-a-gu* 2 KUŠ.MEŠ *ma-za-<sup>2</sup>i*  
 15 [*a-na* (x) ]x-šú KUŠ.E.SI[R.M]EŠ GIBIL.MEŠ

“(One) armoured under-garment; a *gulēnu*; a headband; a girdle; an *urnutu*; 6 minas of wool; [a] *sāgu*; 2 leather water-skins(?); [2?] new pairs of shoes/sandals; ...”.

Here in addition to the *sāgu* and *gulēnu* we have two garments which recur frequently in both the textile labels and other Neo-Assyrian contexts, the *urnutu* and the *šupālītu halluptu*. Let us take first the “armoured under-garment” which is common enough for the scribes to abbreviate it occasionally down to KI *hal*. For *šupālītu* AHw 1278b “Untergewand” and CAD Š/iii 314 “undergarment” are better than “lower garment” (my rendering in SAA 7), since it must have been an “undergarment” (worn closer to the body than another) rather than a “nether garment” (worn on the lower body). Though usually qualified by *hallupu* (see below), it could also be “black” (SAA 7 127, 9’) or “white” (SAA 7 94:1), and in Neo-Babylonian texts of linen. As for its usual epithet *hallupu*, since coining the awkward SAA translation I have become more confident that its precise meaning is “armoured”.<sup>25</sup> It was probably manufactured, or at least distributed, by a special profession *ša hallupti-šunu* who received a talent of fibre (wool or linen) in SAA 7 115.i.8. An identification as a mail-shirt is satisfactory, because we require a word for the scale armoured corslets, with or without short sleeves, which are frequently worn by regular soldiers on the reliefs (e.g. Fig. 3). Presumably it was named in contrast to the *elēnītu* which is also worn over as formal a garment as the *kusītu*. In SAA 11 28 (and also SAA 7 94) it is listed next to the *gulēnu*: perhaps it was worn over another shirt or a tunic, but it seems more likely, since one would not choose to wear a mail corslet 24 hours a day or to multiply layers of close-fitting clothes in the Mesopotamian climate, that it was an alternative.

Finally, in l. 13, the *urnutu*, plural *urnāt(e)*. AHw 1431b ein Gewand (aus Filz, Leinen); SAA (a garment, perhaps “tunic”). Frequent in the textile labels, probably usually woollen but also of linen (SAA 7 96 r.3) or of *biršu* (probably a rough fabric, with CAD B 261a, rather than felt which is *taḥapšu*). Coloured woollen and linen ones feature in a dowry (Parker 1954, 37:15-18). They can be black and red (SAA 7 109.ii.2’ff.) and also from Byblos (*gu-ub-li*, 108. r.ii.4’). SAA 7 115.ii.10 lists 20 talents of madder(?) for 600 *maqātu*-garments and 600 *urnutu*, confirming at least that they might be provided centrally. Depending on the correct identification of *gulēnu*, this is probably either a shirt or a tunic, but more than that it is premature to say.

<sup>25</sup> See Postgate 2000 for *hallupu*; in connection with the *šupālītu* this meaning of *hallupu* is also supported by the Neo-Babylonian term TÚG *šir<sup>2</sup>am šupālītu* (see CAD Š/iii.314a), since *šir<sup>2</sup>am*, though of textile in NB texts, begins life as a coat of mail.

There are plenty of other terms, of which *maqātu* itself is just one, which still require investigation, but there we must stop for now. The net result of this process is to suggest the following equivalences:

<i>kusītu</i>	“robe”
<i>naḥlaptu</i>	(some kind of coat)
<i>elēnītu</i>	“fringed shawl”
<i>sāgu</i>	“kilt”
<i>šipirtu</i>	“woven girdle”
<i>gulēnu</i>	“tunic”
<i>šupālītu</i>	“shirt”
<i>šupālītu ḥalluptu</i>	“mail shirt”
<i>urnutu</i>	(a shirt or tunic)

There are plenty more terms to be discussed, but if these prove satisfactory we shall have made a start.

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All Figures were drawn by Elizabeth Postgate.