



Jerusalem of Gold — Revisited

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In an article published over thirty-five years ago,¹ I discussed the meaning of the unique Sumerian phrase *uru kù-gi* which appeared in line 4 of an inventory list of the trousseau of Aḥatmilku, queen of Ugarit (mid-fourteenth century BCE):² 1 *uru kù-gi* (= Akk. *ālu ḥurāṣu*) *ki-lá-bi* (= Akk. *šugultašū*) 2 *me'at* 15, “one city of gold whose weight is 215 (sheqels).”³ Though Nougayrol provisionally translated this item as a “couronne murale,” he was unable to bring any additional epigraphic evidence for the identification of this piece of jewelry. He supported his assumption, however, by referring to iconographic representations that depict such a crown on the heads of female deities and queens. I, in turn, drew documentary support from rabbinic literature for such a mural crown worn by women, where the Hebrew interdialectal semantic and partially etymological cognate, עיר של זהב, was well attested. Thus, in *m. Kelim* 11:8 it is stated: עיר של זהב, “All women’s ornaments are susceptible to impurity (e.g.), a city of gold.” Compare also *m. Šabb.* 6:1, לא תצא אשה... בעיר של זהב, “A woman may not go out (to the public domain on the Sabbath wearing)... a city of gold.”⁴ That this article of jewelry was worn only by women of a high and wealthy status is shown by the following statements: *b. Šabb.* 59b, ר' אלעזר סבר מאן דרכה למיפק בעיר של זהב? אשה חשובה, “Rabbi Elazar was of the opinion, ‘Who is accustomed to go out (wearing) a city of gold? A women of high standing’”; *y. Šabb.* 6.1.7d, מעשה בר"ע שעשה לאשתו עיר של זהב. חמתיה איתתיה דרבן גמליאל וקניית בה. אתה ואמרת קומי, והוא בעלה. אמר לה: הכין הוית עבדת לי כמה דהוות עבדת ליה, דהוות מזבנה מקליעתא דרישא⁵ ויהבת ליה, והוא

1 S. M. Paul, “Jerusalem: A City of Gold,” *IEJ* 17 (1967) 259–63 (= “Jerusalem of Gold: A Song and an Ancient Crown,” *BAR* 3 [1977] 38–41). See H. A. Hoffner, Jr. (“The ‘City of Gold’ and the ‘City of Silver,’” *IEJ* 19 [1969] 178–80), who presents additional Hittite evidence for a *uru.lum kù-babbar*, a “silver city” mural crown, as well as data from Greek and Roman texts for the use of the term “crown” to designate walls and turrets of a city, and “turreted” as an epithet for several deities.

2 J. Nougayrol, *Le Palais Royal d'Ugarit* 3 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1955) no. 16.146 + 161, 182–86, and pl. 51 in the companion volume of plates.

3 According to Nougayrol (*Palais Royal* 3.183), the corresponding weight would be 1.935 kg. It should also be noted that in a *namburbi* text, as part of the elaborate ritual that was performed to rid a person of the evil forecasted by the birth of a malformed baby or animal, it is stated: “You place an AŠ.GUR *ša ḥurāṣi* on the head of the anomaly.” The editor of this text, S. M. Maul, *Zukunftsberwältigung* (Mainz am Rhein: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 1994) 338, n. 6 to line 11, suggested that in two of the copies Sum. AŠ.GUR should possibly be read as *uru*, thus rendering its translation as “a city of gold” (p. 342), even though he did not know why this specific object was employed. His suggested reading has been followed and accepted by M. Stol, *Birth in Babylonia and the Bible: Its Mediterranean Setting* (Groningen: Styx Publications, 2000) 165–166.

4 Cf. *m. 'Ed.* 2:7; *b. Sanh.* 135a; *t. Šabb.* 4.6; and *Midr. Tanḥuma* (ed. Buber 169–70).

5 MS Leiden’s reading is מקליעתא דשערא; cf. *y. Soṭa* 9.16.24c: מקליעתה דשערה.

לעי באורייתא “Rabbi ‘Aqiba made a city of gold for his wife. The wife of Rabban Gamliel (the patriarch) saw it and became jealous of her. She came and reported this in front of her husband. He replied, ‘Have you done for me what she has done for him? She sold the very braids on her head and gave (the money) to him, so that he might be able to study Torah.’” Rabban Gamliel’s wife was reacting to the gift that Rabbi ‘Aqiba gave to his wife, Rachel, after he had amassed a considerable amount of wealth:⁶ (ר”ע) אמרו: לא נפטר עד שהיו לו שולחנות של כסף וזהב ועד שעלה על מטתו בסולמות של זהב. היתה אשתו יוצאה בקרדוטין⁷ ובעיר “They said that before (Rabbi ‘Aqiba) died he owned tables of silver and gold and mounted his bed on ladders of gold. His wife used to go about (wearing) sandals of gold and a city of gold. His disciples said to him: ‘Master, you put us to shame for what you have done for her’. He answered them, ‘Much did she suffer for my sake that I might study Torah’.”

The actual identification of this article of jewelry becomes apparent from the variant version of this midrash, which substitutes the reading כתר של זהב, “crown of gold,” for עיר של זהב, “city of gold.”⁸ That this is the correct interpretation of the phrase is further substantiated by the following passage in *b. Soṭa* 49b: מאי עטרות כלות? עיר של זהב, “What is meant by bridal crowns? A city of gold.”⁹

In sum, rabbinic sources clearly demonstrate that עיר של זהב was an expensive golden crown donned by prominent women, which accords very well with the *uru kù:gi* found in Queen Aḥatmilku’s inventory. This very same crown, moreover, bore another name in rabbinic literature: ירושלים דזהבא, “Jerusalem of gold,” since, according to the rabbis, the term “city” referred to their city par excellence, Jerusalem.¹⁰ Thus, we read in *b. Šabb.*

6 *‘Abot R. Nat.* Version A, chap. 6 (ed. Schechter 29–30). For a scholarly treatment of this tradition, as well as others associated with Rabbi ‘Akiba in Talmudic literature, see S. Friedman, “A Good Story Deserves Retelling—The Unfolding of the Akiva Legend,” *Jewish Studies Internet Journal* 3 (2004), pp. 55–93.

7 The reading in Version B is קורדיקוס. For other variant readings, see *‘Abot R. Nat.* (ed. Schechter 30 and Addenda, p. 138. Cf. also L. Finkelstein, *Mabo le-Massektot Abot ve-Abot d’Rabbi Nathan* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1950) 135. For the correct interpretation of this word, see S. Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Fshuṭah* 3: *Mo’ed* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1962) 68, ll. 39ff.

8 *‘Abot R. Nat.* Version B, chap. 12 (ed. Schechter 30).

9 See also *Tosafot* to *b. Šabb.* 59a, last comment. Such a crown may also be alluded to in Ps 137:6.

10 For other identifications of עיר as “the city,” i.e., Jerusalem, see Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Fshuṭah* 3: *Mo’ed*, 62. Compare similarly Akk. *ālu*, “city,” which referred to Ur and Nippur in the neo-Sumerian period, and thereafter to Aššur, Isin, Larsa, and Babylon. See W. W. Hallo, “Antediluvian Cities,” *JCS* 23 (1970) 60.

59a–59b, מאי עיר של זהב? רבה בר בר חנה א"ר יוחנן: ירושלים דדהבא כדעבד ליה רבי עקיבא לדביתהו, “What is meant by a city of gold? Rabbah bar Bar Ḥannah said in Rabbi Yoḥanan’s name: ‘A Jerusalem of gold like (the one) Rabbi ‘Aqiba made for his wife’.” Moreover, by giving his wife such a crown, Rabbi ‘Aqiba actually fulfilled a promise he had made to her in his early years, as it is stated in *b. Ned.* 50a: ירושלים דדהבא ליך רמינא לי הואי אי הווי לה: אמר לה: “He said to her, ‘If I could only afford it, I would attire you with a Jerusalem of gold’.”

The reason this specific crown was called “city” is because a city was defined by its surrounding walls, along with its distinctive battlements and turrets.¹¹ And this can be corroborated by yet another rabbinic source, where the Jerusalem of gold crown is described by the rabbis of Caesarea as פרושטוקטלין (*y. Šabb.* 6.1.7d). In the *Aruch*,¹² however, there is a variant reading: כרוסוקטולין, which Lieberman correctly emended to כרוסוקסטולין, i.e., χρυσοκαστέλλιον, “turret of gold,”¹³ which serves as an accurate

11 See E. Porada, “Battlements in the Military Architecture and in the Symbolism of the Ancient Near East,” *Essays in the History of Art Presented to Rudolf Wittkover on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday* (ed. D. Fraser et al.; London: 1967) 11. Compare also E. D. van Buren (“The *šalmē* in Mesopotamian Art and Religion,” *Or* 10 [1941] 85–86), who draws attention to the bas-reliefs at Khorsabad, where priests and temple attendants are shown “carry(ing) in one or both hands objects resembling models of buildings with towers crowned by square turrets at intervals. Professor Dr. A. Pohl, S.J. has proposed to identify these objects with the *šalmē ālāni* (‘images of cities’). It is noteworthy that in appearance the models are precisely alike, a wall, presumably forming a square, surmounted by four towers; therefore a model never portrayed the aspect of any particular city, but was a generic conception of a city. Possibly every model was inscribed with the name of the city it represented symbolically, thus theoretically differentiating the images” (Fig. 5). Cf. V. Place, *Ninive et l’Assyrie* 3 (Paris: Imprimerie Impériale, 1867) pl. 48, fig. 1; G. Loud, *Khorsabad 1: The Excavations in the Palace and at a City Gate* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936) figs. 34, 35, 43, 55; P. Abenda, *The Palace of Sargon, King of Assyria* (Paris: Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1986) pls. 24, 29–33, figs. 29, 79.

12 An eleventh-century talmudic dictionary: Rabbi Nathan ben Rabbi Yehiel of Rome, *Sefer HaAruch* (Berlin: Sefarim, 1927) 131–32.

13 S. Lieberman (*Hayerushalmi Kiphshuto* 1.1 [Jerusalem: Darom, 1934] 102) first emended the corrupt Greek to χρυσοστέφανος, “a crown of gold.” For his later correction, see his *Tosefta Ki-Fshutah* 8: *Nashim* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1973) 767. This reading is preferable to the one suggested by S. Abramson (“Divrey Ḥachamim ve-Ḥidotam,” *Lešonenu* 25 [1955] 75–76), who suggested the reading טריסטוקולין, Gr. τρεῖς τὸ κόλλιον, i.e. a crown of “three tiers welded together.” This misinterpretation was followed by E. E. Urbach, “Heavenly and Earthly Jerusalem,” *Jerusalem through the Ages* (ed. J. Aviram; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1968) 166–67 (Hebrew). Lieberman also called attention in his later work to the comment of the thirteenth-century rabbi, Riaz (= Rabbi Isaiah ben Elijah of Trani, known as Riaz the Younger), who, in his book, *Me’at Devash* (ed. D. Sassoon [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928] 24), commented: שלא לעטר את הכלות בעטרות של זהב, שהן דומות לחומות העיר, “not to crown the brides with diadems of gold [see below], which resemble the city walls.”



Fig. 1. Depiction of the heads of Hittite female deities at the rock sanctuary of Yazilikaya.

description of this diadem and which can be further supported by iconographic evidence. Such a distinctive turreted/battlemented crown is found, for the first time, on the heads of Hittite female deities on the rock sanctuary of Yazilikaya (1250–1200 BCE), some 1.5 miles northeast of Hattusha, built by King Tudḫaliya IV (Fig. 1).¹⁴ Compare also the crown on the head of an Elamite queen on a relief from the neo-Elamite period (ninth–seventh centuries) (Fig. 2),¹⁵ and the crown worn by two prominent Assyrian

14 K. Bittel, *Die Felsbilder von Yazilikaya* (Bamberg: Archaeologisches Institut des deutschen Reiches Abteilung Istanbul, 1934) pl. 12; K. Bittel, R. Naumann, and H. Otto, *Yazilikaya: Architektur, Felsbilder, Inschriften und Kleinfunden* (WVDOG 61; Osnabreich: O. Zeller, 1941) 116–18, fig. 46; E. Akurgal, *Späthethitische Bildkunst* (Ankara: Archaeologisches Institut der Universitaet Ankara, 1949) 10–12; idem, *The Art of the Hittites* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1962) 111–12, fig. 19 and pls. 76–77.

15 E. Porada, *Ancient Iran: The Art of Pre-Islamic Times* (London: Methuen, 1965), 66–67, fig. 42; 234, n. 46. See also U. Seidl, *Die elamischen Felsreliefs von Kurangun und Naqs-e Rostam* (Iranische Denkmäler 12/2, Iranische Felsreliefs H; Berlin: Reimer, 1986), 19, who proposed that the figure of the queen wearing a crenellated crown on this relief should be dated to the 9th century. In his review of this book (as well as elsewhere), P. de Miroschedji, *Syria* 66 (1989): 358–62, maintains that this figure should be dated to the 7th century, *grosso modo* contemporary with the images of Naqia and Aššuršarrat.



Fig. 2. Crown on the head of an Elamite queen on a relief from the Neo-Elamite period (9th–7th centuries).



Fig. 3. Crown worn by Naqia, mother of Esarhaddon (7th century).

women: Naqia, the mother of Esarhaddon (Fig. 3),¹⁶ and Aššuršarrat, the wife of Aššurbanipal (Figs. 4, 6, 7)¹⁷—both from the seventh century.¹⁸

It is interesting to note that such a crown is also mentioned in the *Tg. Yerusalmi*, in its interpretation

16 A. Parrot, *The Arts of Assyria* (New York: Golden Press, 1961) 118, fig. 133.

17 H. Frankfort, *Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1954) pl. 114, the “garden scene at Küyunjik”; W. Andrae, *Die Stelenreihe in Assur* (WVDOG 24; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1913) 7, fig. 3 and pl. X, stèle 1. For another depiction of a mural crown worn by Queen Aššuršarrat, see Fig. 6. See also T. Kwasman and S. Parpola eds., *Legal Transactions of the Royal Court of Nineveh I: Tiglath-Pileser III through Esarhaddon* (SAA 6; Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1991) 70, fig. 16, taken from R. C. Thompson and R. W. Hutchinson, “The Site of the Palace of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh, excavated in 1929–30 on behalf of the British Museum,” *Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology* 18 (1931) 79–112, pl. XXXI (Fig. 7). See now T. Ornan, “The Queen in Public: Royal Women in Neo-Assyrian Art,” *Sex and Gender in the Ancient Near East = Proceedings of the XLVII^e Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale* (eds. S. Parpola and R. H. Whiting; The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, Institute for Asian and African Studies; Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2002) 474–77.

18 For a comprehensive collection and typology of the iconographic evidence for such crowns from the thirteenth century BCE to the thirteenth century CE, see S. Pougatsch (“Mural Crowns from Antiquity to the Middle Ages” [Masters thesis; Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1974], who documents these crowns from Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Iran, Greece (special attention to Tyche), Rome, and in Byzantine and medieval art (see, e.g., Fig. 8). See also P. Calmeyer, “Mauerkrone,” *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* 7 (ed. E. Ebeling; Berlin and New York: W. de Gruyter, 1987–90) 595–96.

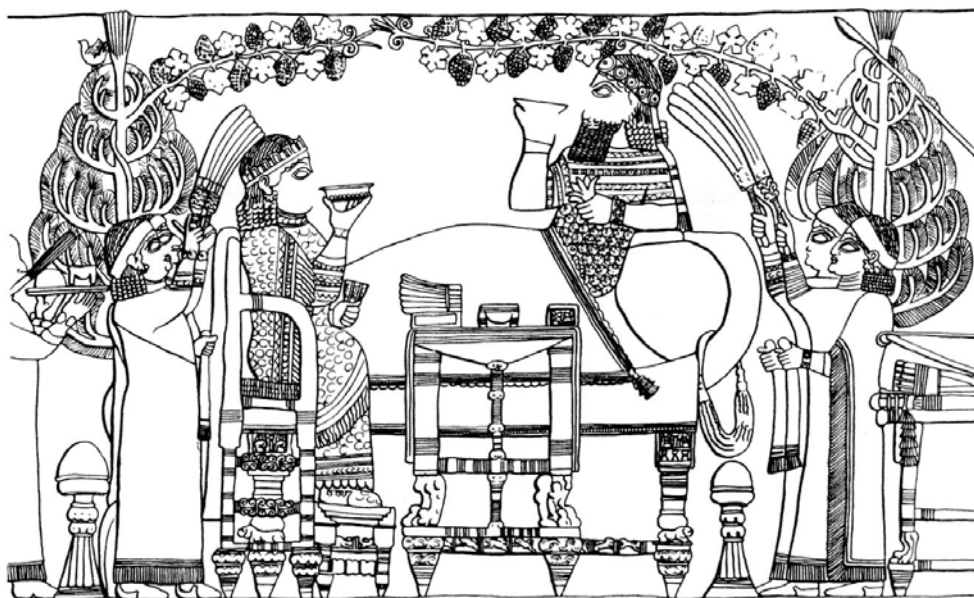


Fig. 4. Crown worn by Aššuršarrat, wife of Aššurbanipal (7th century).

of Exod 32:25: כְּלִילָא דְּהַבָּא, “diadem of gold”¹⁹ (so, too, *Tg. Neofiti*: כְּלִילָא דְּהַבָּא)²⁰ and in the plural in Num 31:50: קוֹרֵיִּיא דְּהַבָּא, “cities of gold”²¹ (and in *Tg. Neofiti*: קִרְיָה כְּלִילִיָּה (דְּהַבָּה)).²²

The missing epigraphical link between the occurrence of this phrase in the Ugaritic text and its reappearance in talmudic and targumic sources can now be supplied from an Aramaic tablet from neo-Assyrian times.²³ In a legal document describing the sale of a

19 M. Ginsburger, *Das Fragmententhargum* (= *Targum Sheni la-Torah*) (Berlin: S. Calvary, 1899) 44.

20 A. Díez Macho, *Neophyti I 2: Exodo* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1970) 215.

21 Ginsburger, *Das Fragmententhargum*, 59.

22 Díez Macho, *Neophyti I 4: Números* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1974) 295. Heb. and Aram. כְּלִילָא, “crown, garland,” are the cognate equivalents of Akk. *kiḫlu*, “circlet, headband, battlements,” and *kulūlu*, “part of a headdress (turban), cornice (as an architectural term)” (*CAD*, K, 358, 527–28).

23 A. Lemaire, *Nouvelles Tablettes Araméennes* (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2001) 33–41; see especially pp. 36–37. The term appears on l. 7 of the document. I would like to personally thank Professor Lemaire for bringing this text to my attention. Another possible occurrence may be found in the Adad-Guppi stele from the time of Nabonidus, the last king of the neo-Babylonian period (mid-sixth century BCE).

slave, it is stated that if anyone contests the case, he shall have to give a *קרית זהב*, a “city of gold,” to the goddess Nikkal, who was the wife of the moon god, Sahar (= Sin)—a fitting gift to the goddess, since, as shown above, the crown was worn by both goddesses and queens alike.²⁴

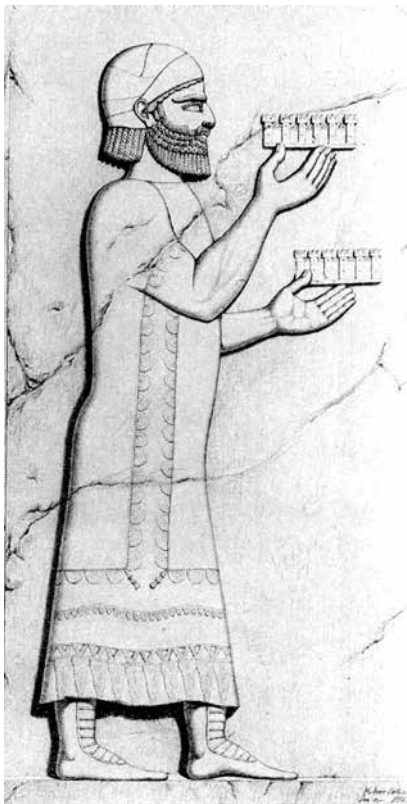


Fig. 5. Bas-relief from Khorsabad, depicting a priest or temple attendant carrying in both hands objects resembling models of buildings with towers crowned by square turrets.

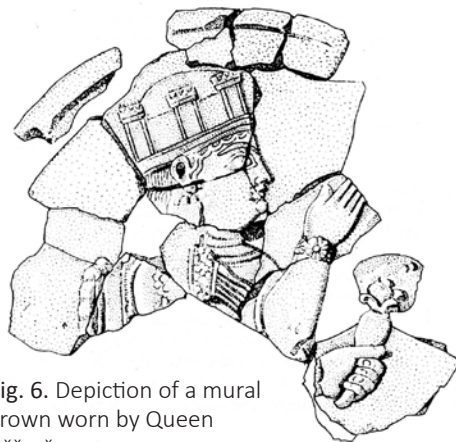


Fig. 6. Depiction of a mural crown worn by Queen Aššuršarrat.



Fig. 7. Depiction of a mural crown worn by Queen Aššuršarrat.

In the description of the items that he placed in her grave, there is mentioned an *a-lu kù·si*₂₂, which H. Schaudig (*Die Inschriften Nabonids von Babylon und Kyros des Grossen* [Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2001] 508, col. III, l. 29', exemplar 2) suggests to translate “Mauerkrone aus Gold” (n. 742).

24 It should be noted that the only Jewish queen who is represented as wearing a “city of gold” is Esther, as she is portrayed on the western wall, center register, of the late second century ce synagogue at Dura Europos in Syria (Fig. 9). See E. R. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* 9 (Bollingen Series 37; New York: Pantheon, 1964) 179.



Fig. 8. Greek goddess adorned with a mural crown.



Fig. 9. Queen Esther wearing a "city of gold," as portrayed on the western wall, center register, of the late second century CE synagogue at Dura Europos, Syria.

Sources of Illustrations

Fig. 1. after Bittel, *Die Felsbilder*, Pl. 12.

Fig. 2. E. Porada, *Ancient Iran: The Art of Pre-Islamic Times* [London: Methuen, 1965], 67, Fig. 42; used by permission of Thomson Publishing).

Fig. 3. A. Parrot, *The Art of Assyria* [New York, 1961], 118, Fig. 133; used by permission of Thomson Publishing.

Fig. 4. H. Frankfort, *Art and Architecture of the Ancient Orient* [Harmondsworth, 1954], Pl. 114, the "garden scene at Küyunjik."

Fig. 5. van Burned, "The salmê," 85-86.

Fig. 6. after Andrae, *Die Stelenreihen*, 7, Abb. 3, Stèle 15756/8.

Fig. 7. Kwasman and Parpola, *Legal Transactions*, 70, Fig. 16; used by permission of Helsinki University Press.

Fig. 8. After Pougatsch, *Mural Crowns*, 2: Fig. 46.

Fig. 9. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols*, Pl.6; used by permission of Knopt Publishing.

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