The inscription on the reverse of the Šarrat-nīpi lion: An Ashurnasirpal text from Calah

LYNNE C. GEORGE
University of Toronto

with

W. DE FILIPPI
University of Toronto

The text presented here is from the reverse of the Šarrat-nīpi lion in the possession of the British Museum. A second lion from the Šarrat-nīpi temple in Calah is located in Mosul, but information as to whether this second lion bears an inscription on the reverse is not available. At this point, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Christopher Walker for passing on the inscription to Dr A.K. Grayson and for his prompt collation of the text. I also wish to thank Dr Grayson and Dr Gilbert McEwan for their kind assistance in reading the manuscript, and, particularly, Miss W. de Filippi for bringing the text to my attention and assisting in its preparation.

The inscription is 21 lines in length, and bears a long, inverted T-shaped, repaired fissure, which slightly mutilates but does not obliterate several signs. The text also contains a number of errors and omissions, and, in general, the signs and the spacing exhibit the same inconsistencies in representation noted by Paley in his study of the Ashurnasirpal reliefs from Calah.

The structure of the inscription is similar in some ways to the inscription on the reverse of the Ninurta temple slabs published by W. de Filippi in Assur, Volume 1. It contains:

i. the king's name and titles, followed by those of his father and grandfather (line 1)
ii. an abbreviated section describing the king's valour and military might (line 2)
iii. the king's standard titulary with the passage इशु रेकू नेिः अधि मात्स मरीथ एवे बेलनी describing the limit of his conquests (lines 3 to 7a)
iv. a description of the rebuilding of Calah with some deviations in phraseology from the Ninurta temple inscription (lines 7b to 9a)
v. a description of the building of the Šarrat-nīpi, Ninurta, Gula, and Sin temples, a description of the fashioning of an image of Ištar, and the construction of a throne dais, and the establishment of cereal offerings. (lines 9b to 14a).

Unlike the inscription on the reverse of the slabs from the Ninurta temple, the present text contains a curse formula in terms reminiscent of the Ištar Kidmuri inscription (ARI 2 19 §691). This is, in fact, the only other inscription of Ashurnasirpal in which the phrase इना बटी किल्ली occurs.

The similarity in phraseology between the present text, on the one hand, and the Ninurta reverse inscription, the 'annals', and the inscription of Ištar Kidmuri, on the other, may be an important consideration for establishing the chronological priority of these texts, but such a study is beyond the scope of the present article. Moreover, the difficulties inherent in such a study would be compounded by the possibility that the similarities may be functional, rather than chronological. For instance, the present inscription, the Ištar Kidmuri inscription, and

1 Dr Grayson has kindly relinquished his prior rights to the text. The text is published by permission of the Trustees of the British Museum.
4 The phraseology is the same as that in the Great Monolith and the Wall inscription: 'The ancient city Kalach which Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, a prince who preceded me, had built ...' (Grayson, ARI 2, §619). It also adds here in the description of the rebuilding of Calah the phrase used in the Ištar Kidmuri inscription in connection with the renovation of the temple: 'in the wisdom of my heart which Ea, king of the Apsû, in his broad understanding had given to me ...'.
5 The present inscription differs from the Ninurta reverse inscription published by de Filippi in that it mentions four temples. The same four temples are again mentioned in the description of the building of the Ninurta temple in the 'annals' (Grayson, ARI 2 §76).
6 Ninurta temple slabs reverse refers to the establishment of feast days.
in a hi-Sîh-tî DINGIR.MES GAL.MES šâ [ÂGî-nî 4LAMMA-tâ 4NANNA NIN-a šâ ina pa-an la-a GÂL-[GU] DINGIR-SA GAL-tum lu u-Sâ-ri-hî
15. ŠUM-ud MU.MES-a lu ta-tas-qar SANGA-ti lu ta-ram a-na na-dan zi-bi-ia lu tâb-du e-ma MURUB, u MÊ l[U]-sa-ma-ra] šù-un-Šat a-[Lu] [Î]-rušâk-[š]-di-na-nun-ù
19. ina E ki-lî la a-ma-ri GAR-nu u mim-na NIM.NIG.GIG pa-an E.KUR šû-a-tû uš-generated ku 4MAš in ME-ŠI u šâ-ga-as-te 4NANNA be-lat MURUB, u MÊ MAN-SU
21. NUMUN-Šù ina KUR lu ZÂH

Translation

1. Ashurnasirpal the great king, the strong king, king of the universe, king of Assyria, the son of Tukulti-Ninurta, the great king, the strong king, king of the universe, king of Assyria, the son of Adadneri (who was) also the great king, the strong king, king of the universe, king of Assyria;

2. (Ashurnasirpal), the valiant fighter, who with the support of Ashur his lord marches about and among the four quarters of the universe, has no equal. The king who, from the east through the Tigris region to the Lebanon mountains and the Great Sea, the whole land of Laqê, the land of Suhi to the city of Rapiqu, at his feet

3. Tigris region to the Lebanon mountains and the Great Sea, the whole land of Laqê, the land of Suhi to the city of Rapiqu, at his feet

4. he has cause to bow down. From the source of the Subnat to the interior of the land of Nirib his hand has conquered. From the passes of the land of Kurrmi to the land of Gilzani,

5. from the other side of the Lower Zab to Til-bari, which is upstream from Zaban, from Til-sha-Abtani to Til-sha-

6. Zabdani, the cities of Hirimu (and) Harutu, for-
tresses of the land of Karduniash (Babylonia) I added to the territory of my land, and over
7. the totality of the wide Nairi lands I have become master. The ancient city of Kalhu which Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, a prince who preceded me, had built,
8. had fallen into decay and lay deserted (and) later had become a complete ruin. In the wisdom of my heart which Ea king of the Apsu in his broad understanding had given to me, that city
9. I took in hand anew. I cleared the old mound and dug down to water level. I excavated to a depth of 120 layers of brick, and a temple of Ninurta, Šarrat-nipḫi, Gula, and Sin
10. I founded therein. I completed that temple and established (it) as a dwelling for the great gods. That temple for the viewing of the eternal kings and princes
11. I built. In my wisdom and understanding, (and) with regard for the needs of the great gods who loved me, a statue of Ishtar my lady as had never existed before (for) her great divinity I indeed made splendid.
12. Of the choicest stone, fine gold, and red gold I made it. Her throne dais I set up therein forever. That temple I made suitably splendid, ... beams
13. of cedar I erected therein, (and) tall doors of cedar I set in its gates. Fierce lions of white limestone
14. I made (and) I set (them) up in its gates. When Šarrat-nipḫi the great lady sits on her pure throne in her alluring dwelling, may she be steadfastly radiant,
15. (and) my years numerous. May she love my priesthood. May she be pleased at the giving of my cereal-offerings (and) may she let me attain the desire of my heart anywhere I strive in battle or conflict.
16. O future prince among the kings my sons whom Ashur may appoint to the shepherdship of Assyria: Do not remove these lions from their gates or delete my name inscribed (on them), (but rather)
17. repair their dilapidation (and) restore my inscribed name to its place. (Then) may Ashur, the great lord, Ninurta, and Ishtar who dwells in this land establish fullness, abundance, and plenty in his land. May his subjects walk about in a lordly manner and in all lands
18. in the war of kings upon the battlefield may they make him obtain his heart's desire; (but) whoever deletes my inscribed name, (or) moves these lions, (or) throws (them) into the water, (or) burns them with fire,
19. (or) places (them) in a prison, hidden away, or inflicts any sacrilege whatever on this temple, may Ninurta, the lord of storm and destruction, and Ishtar the lady of war and battle overthrow his kingship,
20. take away his throne, make him sit before his enemies like a captive, establish want, famine, and hunger in his land, (and) make his name and his seed disappear from the land.

Commentary

11. The syntax of this line is inelegant. I have translated ina hiš-ti DINGIR.MES GAL.MES as 'with regard for the needs of the great gods', since some such translation as this seems to be required in the context, but ina mūḫḫi or ana would have been preferred. The phrase 'her great divinity I indeed made splendid' disrupts the flow of the line, and deviates from the standard phraseology. Compare Grayson, ARI 2 cr 1 §576 from the Ninurta temple inscription 'annals', 'At that time I created with my cunning that statue of the god Ninurta which had not existed previously as an icon of his great divinity out of the best stone of the mountain and red gold', and W. de Filippi, Assur 1/7, p.20-21 Nin. rev., lines 13-14, ibid. The phraseology is closer, perhaps, to the description of temple building in the Banquet Stela, 'I made (the images of) their great divinity resplendent with red gold and sparkling stones' (Grayson, ARI 2 cr 17 §679), but here the problem is resolved by not mentioning the non-pre-existence of the images, and by substituting lu ušar-riḫ for lu ab-nīš as the verb at the end of the phrase.
13. In the description of the cedar beams one expects še/si-ḫu-te 'long', not ši-ḫa-ḫu-te, which according to von Soden, AHw p.1252a means 'noble, fine, proud', and is normally applied to gods and kings.
19. The sign that I have emended to il (?) is unclear. C.B.F. Walker suggests il (?).