THE INSCRIPTION OF THE URARTIAN KING RUSA II
AT KEFKALESI (ADILCEVAZ)

by Mirjo Salvini

In July 1995, during my staying in Van, I had the opportunity to collate the cuneiform inscriptions on the sculpted square stone blocks from the old excavation of Kefkalesi, which are kept in Adilcevaz, in the courtyard of the School (fig. 1). The best preserved block is exhibited in the Museum for Ana-

Fig. 1 – Carved stone blocks from the aštûsî building in Kefkalesî. School of Adilcevaz. Measures of each block: basis 140x140, height 110 cm.

tolian Civilizations in Ankara¹, but while the four sculpted faces are generally in good condition, the inscription which runs on the upper edge is incomplete on each exemplar. The important discoveries made by Altan Çilingir-oğlu on the site of Ayans (ancient Rusaḫinili Eidurukai) give renewed importance to every aspect of the Urartian civilization during Rusa II’s reign (7th century B.C.). The close similarity between some buildings of Ayans and Kefkalesi, in particular the so called “pillar halls”, make it more and more important to investigate and to reconstruct every detail of Rusa II’s documentation. The same inscription is repeated on each of the nine carved blocks unearthed in Kefkalesi, but the text has not yet been published in a satisfactory way. Only the first quarter of the text, corresponding to one of the four faces, was copied by the excavators² (see fig. 2). I can now offer a complete transcription, which has very few assured restitutions of single signs³:

1 ḫal-di-ni-ni al-su-i-ši-ni mru-sa-a-še mar-giš-te-ḫi-ni-še i-ni
2 É a-ši-hu-si-e za-du-ni qar-bi-e sú-li ma-nu ú-i a-i-še-e-i
3 LUGAL-še za-da-la-ni šú-ki ḫal-di-i-še i-zi-du-ú-ni i-e-še za-du-bi
4 mru-sa-a-[še] a-li a-lu-še i-n[i DUB-t]e tú-li-e a-mi-ni-ni ṣUṬU-ni-še

"By the power of Ḫaldi, Rusa, the son of Argisti, built this ašihūsi house. The rock was untouched(?) , a (prior) king had built nothing (before). When(?) Ḫaldi ordered, I made (it). Rusa says: whoever destroys this [inscription], may the Sun God burn him (off)”.

The general meaning of this inscription is clear, but there are some lexical and interesting morphological new points. The first question concerns the building called É ašihūsi. It is evidently the name of the noblest architectural part of the fortress, which is characterized by those carved blocks. The translation given by E. Bilgic and B. Ögün in their first publication is “place of cult for drinking sacrifice”⁴, but it cannot be accepted. This translation goes back to F.W. König, who proposed two alternative translations for É ašihūsi, namely “Tempel des Göttertums” and “Kultraum

² E. Bilgic and B. Ögün, “Anatolia” 9, 1965, 1ff, Pl. XXIV (the copy) and p. 18 (the translation).
³ The following transcription is divided into four parts corresponding to the four sides of the stone blocks.
A word *ašiši*ni, from which König derives, as a secondary formation, *ašišusi*, does not exist. It is a more than problematic reading among many in the Topzawa bilingual stele of Rusa I. König translates this *ašiši*ni (Topz., Ur. 23) with “Festmahl oder Opferhaus” on the basis of the believed correspondence with *nap–tan* of the Assyrian version (Topz., Ass. 22). But see my new edition of the Topzawa bilingual stele⁷, where I read LÚ.‘UN?–še¹–ni instead of *a–ši–hi–ni. To date, we do not have a sure connection or an etymology of this word, either in Urartian or in Hur-

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5 HcHl, p. 74 and 145.
6 HcHl, p. 145 and № 122, line 23.
7 In: P.E. Pecorella e M. Salvini, Tra lo Zagros e l’Urmia, Roma 1984, p. 87 and 92.
rian. The only tentative link that I can establish is with an obscure word —śi-i-ni, which occurs in the monumental temple inscription of Rusa II in Karmir-blur (UKN II 448, 22 = NUNKb Text I, lines 21-22): (21) ... a-li ās-du-li-e (22) ši-na-am-di-ni mu-ri-e a-ši-i-ni a-še ši-ú-li ... I cannot deal here with the numerous problems of the translation, to which the next publication will be dedicated, but only note that the preceding word murī, also accompanied by the determinative Ē, probably means “storehouse, silo”.

Sarduri's II annals offer the following context (in bound transcription): Ē murili ali tōAD-še tōAD-AD-še zaduali ... iēše 350 ēmurie ḥaubi, “the silos(?), which father and grandfather had built ... I took/conquered 350 silos(?).” The word šinamdini is a derivation of the numeral šina (“two”) in both Hurrian and Urartian, but its morphological structure remains obscure. I advance the hypothesis that asini has the same root as ašihusi, and that this complex word could be analysed as **aši=ḫ(i)=usi**. The final suffix -usi is known as a formative of substantives: cf. for example Ēurišhusi, that probably means “treasury”.

From the archaeological point of view, I note that the Urartian ašihusi buildings had columns, as we can deduce from the inscriptions on column bases from other sites (HchI 53b-54b = UKN 82-85). From the excavation of Kefkalesi we learn that it was an important representation building, since the above inscription on the beautiful decorated stone blocks states “this ašihusi building”. But also the find spot of the blocks is interesting: they had fallen from a higher point into the large pithoi storage room. Moreover, an epigraphic source attests that the Ē ašihusi is connected with the storerooms for cereals, the so called Ē ṣari. I refer to the inscription UKN II 419 of Sar-
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duri II from Arin-berd and first published by myself in 1969\(^{15}\). The central part of the document states: (line 5) ı-ni ša-ši-ḫu-si (6) ẓa-du-ni e-2a i-ni-li (7) ʿa-ri-li šu-ʿa-li, “he built this ašiḫusi building and he made/excavated these silos”.

Now, summarizing all the elements, we know that the ašiḫusi building was an important representation building of the Urartian fortresses, which was directly and architectonically connected to the storage rooms (silos and cellars). But this relative topographical situation was not exclusive to the _kelasbi; another inscription of Sarduri II, from Armavir, shows the association of a different building, named Subviewsi, with the silos (ʿari)\(^{16}\). Unfortunately we do not have an idea of the aspect and function of this building, since the few attestations recur on erratic stone inscriptions\(^{17}\). Neither do we know the archaeological context of the numerous silo foundation texts\(^{18}\). This is a negative aspect of Urartian archaeological research.

The terminology of this short inscription is typical of Rusa’s II texts.

šuli: compare the following attestations in the Keşiş gol stele text (UKN 268 = HchI 121, lines 7-8, 14-15): (7) ... e-ʿ[a] (8) KURMES-še gu-ni šu-li ma-nu ... (14) ... qu-ul-di-[ni] (15) [šu]-li ma-ru ...; the understanding is very problematic, but we have quldini “empty/undeveloped” and šuli “untouched(?)”, which describe the situation before the construction of the big artificial lake (actual Keşiş gol) for the water supplying the new royal residence in Rusaḫinili/Toprakkale.

zadalani: this is a new form of the verb zadu— “to make, accomplish”. I have discussed similar forms, qabqars=ul=alani, ḫai=alani (*ḫau=alani), par(u)=alani\(^{19}\) and I have interpreted them as a past perfect tense. These forms express an action which precedes that of the preterit tense (qabqars=ul=bi, ḫau=bi, paru=bi), in this case zadu=ni “he made/built-it”.

šuki: foundation text of Rusai URU.TUR/Bastam by Rusa II (UKN 280 = HchI 129, lines 4-6): (4) ... qar-bi sal-zi ma-nu ú-ı gi-e-i (5) iṣ-ti-ni ši-da-ū-ri šu-kī ḫal-di-še (6) ú-bar-du-du-ni i-e-še ʾiš-di-šu-tū-bi; “the rock was untouched, nothing was built here (before), when(?) Ḥaldi ordered, I constructed (it)”. Loosely translated, šuki could mean something like “when”, but there is also a possible etymological connection with a Hurrian word.

\(^{15}\) See M. Salvini, SMEA 9, 1969, inscr. n° IV = UKN II 419.

\(^{16}\) It was first published in 1989 in Armenian by S.G. Hmayakyan; see now my new publication in “Eothen” 8, 1998, 99 ff.

\(^{17}\) UKN 88 = HchI 55a; UKN 89 = HchI 56; UKN 90 = HchI 55b; UKN 299 = HchI 5c; UKN II 379.


\(^{19}\) SMEA 2, 1980, 158 f.
The Hurrian–Hittite bilingual text from Boğazköy presents the following equation: Hurrian šu-uk-ki = 1–ŠU “once”, in the Hittite version. In fact we already have a word meaning “when”: it is iu. šuki could signify that the supreme god Ḥaldi gives his order only “once”, and immediately his “servant” Rusa carries it out.

Rusa’s II stela in Zwartnots (UKN 281 = Hchl 126, lines 7-10): (7) qi-ū-ra-a-ni šū-li-e ma-nu (8) ū-i gi-e-i iš-ti-ni ma-nu-r[i] (9) šū1-ki ṣ𝛼̃-di-še ū-bar-du-du-ni (10) ṭ1-e-šē i-ni aš-ul-di-fe1 (11) [t]e-ru-bi ...; “the earth was waste/empty/undeveloped, nothing existed here (before); when(? Ḥaldi ordered, I founded this vineyard ...”.

iziduni: this preterit form occurs only twice, cf. Argištī’s II stela in Çeleşbağı (Hchl 125 Vs. 28-34): (28) KIMES qu-ul-di-ni ma-nu ū-i gi-fi (29) ab-si-i GĀN ʿŠE ul-di za-a-rī (30) iš-ti-ni ma-nu-ri ū-i PA₂ iš-ti-ni (31) a-ga-ū-ri šu-ū-ki ṣ𝛼̃-di-i-še (32) i-zī-du-ni a-ra-me ṣ𝛼̃-di-še (33) za-du-bi i-ni šu-e a-su-a-ḥi-na (34) KURba-ba-na-di KURa-i-ri ... “the earth was empty/undeveloped, no one single(? cornfield vineyard orchard existed here, no canal was excavated. When(? Ḥaldi ordered(? it, Ḥaldi gave me (to make it?), I made this artificial lake ... to the Airi mountain ...

a-mi-ni-ni (see fig. 3): This form is new in the cursing formulas. It is an imperative of am-, “to burn off”, a clear Hurrian–Urartian verbal root, which was attested in the enlarged root am=ašt– “to burn down”. It can be analyzed am=ini=ni, where /ini/ expresses the imperative mode and /ni/ the object suffix, “him”. Cf. the frequent tū-ri-ni-ni (tur=ini=ni) “annihilate

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21 In his bilingual stela Rusa II states that he is “the servant of Ḥaldi”, see M. Salvini, in: P.E. Pecorella – M. Salvini, Tra lo Zagros e l’Urmia, Rome 1984, 84ff.
22 The text lies on the parvis of the mosque of the village of Çeleşbağı and was collated by me in August 1990. The stela is 167 cm high and 67 cm wide. The stela from Hagi (UKN 276 = Hchl 124, see lines 43-45) is a duplicate of this text. I was unable to find it. One says that it lies under the water of the lake.
23 The word asuḫina is an Hapax Legomenon and it is impossible to translate it. Morphologically it is a locative plural like Rusuḫina, which means “in Rusuḫinili”.
24 The directive suffixe –di provokes this literary translation, although it makes no good sense.
him”\textsuperscript{26}. Moreover this form confirms the phonetic value \textit{mi} for the sign ME\textsuperscript{27}. The connection between the Sun God (\textit{DU}TU) and his action is logical and is attested here for the first time.

To date we do not have any epigraphic or archaeological proof of the existence of an \textit{ašḫuši} building in the fortress of \textit{Rusahinili Eidurukai} (Ayanis) too. Nevertheless we may expect that the prosecution of the excavations in Ayanis can show new links to the architecture of Kefkalesi.

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\textsuperscript{26} The cursing formulas have been listed by W.C. Benedict, JAOS 81 (1961), 384f.

\textsuperscript{27} See I.M. Diakonoff, \textit{HuU} 33-34, and AMI 22, 1989, 79.