

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 *ašihusi* building in Kefkalesi. School of Adilcevaz.
Measures of each block: basis 140×140, 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 Ayanıs (ancient Rusaşinili 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 Ayanıs 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 ʰhal-di-ni-ni al-su-i-ši-ni ʱru-sa-a-še ʱar-giš-te-ħi-ni-še i-ni
- 2 É a-ši-ħu-si-e za-du-ni qar-bi-e šú-li ma-nu ú-i a-i-še-e-i
- 3 LUGÁL-še za-da-la-ni šú-ki ʰhal-di-i-še i-zi-du-ú-ni i-e-še za-du-bi
- 4 ʱru-sa-a-[še] a-li a-lu-še i-n[i DUB-t]e tú-li-e a-mi-ni-ni ʰUTU-ni-še

"By the power of ʰaldi, Rusa, the son of Argišti, built this *ašihusi* house. The rock was untouched(?), a (prior) king had built nothing (before). When(?) ʰaldi ordered, I made (it). Rusa says: whoever destroys this [inscrip]tion, may the Sun God burn him (off)".

The general meaning of this inscription is clear, but there are some lexical problems and interesting morphological new points. The first question concerns the building called É *ašihusi*. 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. Bilgiç 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 *ašihusi*, namely "Tempel des Göttertums" and "Kultraum

¹ See U. Seidl, Urartäische Bauskulpturen, in: M.J. Mellink, E. Porada, T. Özgüç (Eds.), *Studies in Honor of Nimet Özgüç*, Ankara 1993, 557-564, pl. 98-100, esp. p. 559 and literature quoted in note 9. See also W. Orthmann, *Der Alte Orient*, Berlin 1975, photo 378.

² E. Bilgiç and B. Ögün, "Anatolia" 9, 1965, 11ff, 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.

⁴ "Anatolia" 9, 1965, 18. It is surprising that R. Meyer-Opificius, in a recent contribution dedicated to Kefkalesi (*IstMitt* 43, 1993, 267-278), repeats acritically this old interpretation: "eine Kultstätte, die Libationsopfern diente", see p. 272.

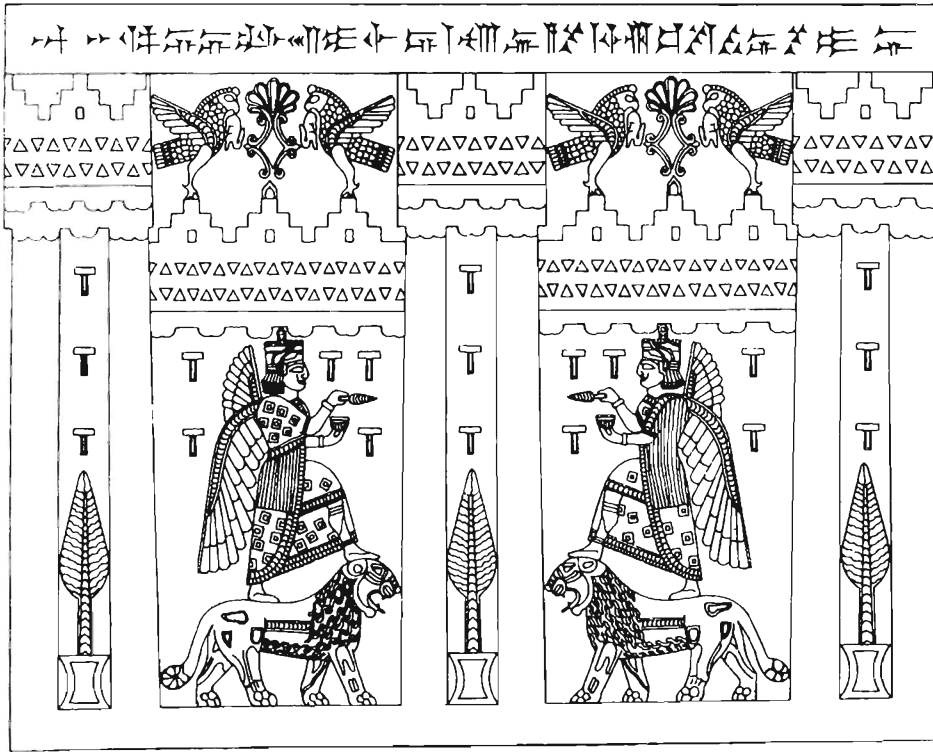


Fig. 2 – Decorated stone block from Kefkalesi (by Adilcevaz), first face; from U. Seidl, quoted in note 1.

für die Trankopfer”⁵. A word **ašihini*, from which König⁶ derives, as a secondary formation, *ašihusi*, does not exist. It is a more than problematic reading among many in the Topzawa bilingual stele of Rusa I. König translates this **ašihini* (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.ʹUN?-še¹-ni instead of **a-ši-ḫi-ni*. To date, we do not have a sure connection or an etymology of this word, either in Urartian or in Hur-

⁵ HchI, p. 74 and 145.

⁶ HchI, p. 145 and N° 122, line 23.

⁷ In: P.E. Pecorella e M. Salvini, *Tra lo Zagros e l’Urmia*, Roma 1984, p. 87 and 92.

rian⁸. The only tentative link that I can establish is with an obscure word *-ši-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)⁹: (21) ... a-li áš-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 *muri*, also accompanied by the determinative É, probably means “storehouse, silo”¹⁰. Sarduri’s II annals offer the following context (in bound transcription): É murili ali ^{LU}AD-še ^{LU}AD.AD-še zaduali ... ieše 350 ^Émurie ħaubi, “the silos(?), which father and grandfather had built ... I took/conquered 350 silos(?)”¹¹. The word *šinamdini* is a derivation of the numeral *šina* (“two”) in both Hurrian and Urartian¹², but its morphological structure remains obscure. I advance the hypothesis that *ašini* has the same root as *ašihusi*, and that this complex word could be analysed as **aši=ħ(i)=usi*. The final suffix *-usi* is known as a formative of substantives: cf. for example ^Éurišħusi, that probably means “treasury”¹³; *-ħi* is attested as a derivation suffix, which forms patronymics. Its function here, if correctly isolated, is not clear.

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 room¹⁴. Moreover, an epigraphic source attests that the É *ašihusi* is connected with the storerooms for cereals, the so called É *ari*. I refer to the inscription UKN II 419 of Sar-

⁸ Hurrian *ašħu* “high” and *ašħijašši* “sacrificer” (GLH 59, 60) have nothing to do with Urartian *ašihusi*, until one has proof of the contrary.

⁹ We have now a new, more important, duplicate with the complete inscription of the *susi* temple of Ayanis, which will be published in the series “Documenta Asiana”.

¹⁰ See M. Salvini, SMEA 22, 1980, 157-158.

¹¹ UKN 155 C 27-31 = HchI 103, § 4 IV. The whole passage is translated in SMEA 22, on “tabella 3” after p. 168. König, HchI p. 195, translates “Schatzhäuser?”, Melikišvili, USpr. p. 85, “geheime Schatzkammer(?)” – all deriving from A. Götze, ZA NF 5 (1930) 128, “Schatzhäuser?” – and Diakonoff, HuU p. 135, generally “Gebäude(?)”. In UPD p. 55 note 17, he proposed that É mu-re-e could be the phonetic reading of É.GAL.

¹² Decisive proof is given by the writing of the corresponding word in the new Ayanis’ inscription: 2-am-di-ni.

¹³ See M. Salvini, “Studia Mediterranea” I, 1979, 584 ff. and SMEA 22, 1980, 187f.

¹⁴ The excavators deduce that “it is almost certain that the blocks ... were originally situated in the area housing the pilons”, “Anatolia” 9, 1965, p. 16.

duri II from Arin-berd and first published by myself in 1969¹⁵. The central part of the document states: (line 5) i-ni ^εa-ši-ḫu-si (6) za-du-ni e-²a i-ni-li (7) ²a-ri-li šú-²a-li, “he built this *ašihusi* building and he made/excavated these silos”.

Now, summarizing all the elements, we know that the *ašihusi* 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 ^ε*ašihusi*; another inscription of Sarduri II, from Armavir, shows the association of a different building, named ^ε*barzidib(i)duni*, with the silos (²*ari*)¹⁶. Unfortunately we do not have an idea of the aspect and function of this building, since the few attestations recur on erratic stone inscriptions¹⁷. Neither do we know the archaeological context of the numerous silos foundation texts¹⁸. 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 göl stele text (UKN 268 = HchI 121, lines 7-8, 14-15): (7) ... e-²[a] (8) ^[KUR]KÜR^{MES}-še gu-ni šú-li ma-nu ... (14) ... qu-ul-di-[ni] (15) [šú]-li ma-nu ...; 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 göl) for the water supplying the new royal residence in Rusahinili/Toprakkale.

zadalani: this is a new form of the verb *zadu-* “to make, accomplish”. I have discussed similar forms, *qabqarš=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 (*qabqarš=ul=u=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-i gi-e-i (5) iš-ti-ni ši-da-ú-ri šú-ki ⁰ḫal-di-še (6) ú-bar-du-du-ni i-e-še ši-di-iš-tú-bi; “the rock was untouched, nothing was built here (before), when(?) Ḫaldi 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.

¹⁸ Cf. the situation in Çavuştepe: A.M. Dinçol, “Anadolu” XXI, 1987, 95-104, published seven such silo foundation texts.

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 version²⁰. In fact we already have a word meaning “when”: it is *iu. šuki* could signify that the supreme god Ḫaldi gives his order only “once”, and immediately his “servant”²¹ Rusa carries it out.

Rusa’s II stela in Zwartnots (UKN 281 = HchI 126, lines 7-10): (7) *qi-ú-ra-a-ni šú-li-e ma-nu* (8) *ú-i gi-e-i iš-ti-ni ma-nu-r[i]* (9) *ʿšú¹-ki ʰhal-di-še ú-bar-du-du-ni* (10) *ʿi¹-e-še i-ni G¹su¹-di-ʿe¹* (11) *[t]e-ru-bi ...*; “the earth was waste/empty/undeveloped, nothing existed here (before); when(?) Ḫaldi ordered, I founded this vineyard ...”.

iziduni: this preterit form occurs only twice, cf. Argišti’s II stela in Çelebibağ (HchI 125 Vs. 28-34²²): (28) *KI^{MES} qu-ul-di-ni ma-nu ú-i gi-ʿi¹* (29) *ab-si-i GÁN ʰŠE ul-di za-a-ri* (30) *iš-ti-ni ma-nu-ri ú-i PA₅ iš-ti-ni* (31) *a-ga-ú-ri šú-ú-ki ʰhal-di-i-še* (32) *i-zi-du-ni a-ru-me ʰhal-di-še* (33) *za-du-bi i-ni šu-e a-su-a-ḫi-na* (34) *KUR^Rba-ba-na-di KUR^Ra-i-ri ...* “the earth was empty/undeveloped, no one single(?) cornfield vineyard orchard existed here, no canal was excavated. When(?) Ḫaldi ordered(?) it, Ḫaldi gave me (to make it?), I made this artificial lake ...²³ to the Airi mountain²⁴ ...”.

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–Uartian verbal root²⁵, 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 *tú-ri-ni-ni* (*tur=ini=ni*) “annihilate



Fig. 3 Stone block from Kefkalesi; detail with the verbal form *a-mi-ni-ni*.

²⁰ KBo XXXII 15 I 23/II 24'. See E. Neu, “Hethitica” IX, 1988, 163.

²¹ In his bilingual stela Rusa II states that he is “the servant of “Ḫaldi”, 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 Çelebibağ and was collated by me in August 1990. The stela is 167 cm high and 67 cm wide. The stela from Hagi (UKN 276 = HchI 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 *asuahina* is an Hapax Legomenon and it is impossible to translate it. Morphologically it is a locative plural like *Rusaḫina*, which means “in Rusaḫinili”.

²⁴ The directive suffix *-di* provokes this literary translation, although it makes no good sense.

²⁵ See M. Salvini, “Orientalia” 59, 1990, 245.

him”²⁶. Moreover this form confirms the phonetic value *mì* for the sign ME²⁷. The connection between the Sun God (^oUTU) 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 *ašihusi* building in the fortress of *Rusaḫinili Eidurukai* (Ayanis) too. Nevertheless we may expect that the prosecution of the excavations in Ayanis can show new links to the architecture of Kefkalesi.

Mirjo Salvini

Istituto per gli studi micenei ed egeo-anatolici (CNR)

Via Giano della Bella, 18

I – 00185 Roma

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

²⁷ See I.M. Diakonoff, HuU 33-34, and AMI 22, 1989, 79.