

SHALMANESER OR ASHURNASIRPAL IN ARARAT ?

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In his paper entitled *Shalmaneser in Ararat*¹, W.G. Lambert published a first edition of O. R. Gurney's Sultantepe tablet *STT* 43, a poetic account of an Assyrian campaign to Urartu. Some comments were added by Kinnier Wilson², W. Schramm³, and probably others, and we now have a second transliteration and translation by A. Livingstone in *SAA* III⁴. This latest version differs from Lambert's rather surprisingly in some details, but these are matters which the author may elucidate elsewhere. I myself have nothing to say on the philological questions involved in this difficult text, though I am indebted to I. L. Finkel for discussing some of them with me, and to Lambert for his comments on a first draft of this paper. My concern is with the general interpretation of the text.

Livingstone evidently agrees with previous scholars that the text describes a campaign by Shalmaneser III. There are several grounds for this dating. One is a reference to Aššur-bel-ka'in, the *turtānu*, named with this title in *STT* 43, Obv. 10. This man gave his name as eponym to the year 856, Shalmaneser's third full year of reign. In this same year, Shalmaneser captured Til-Barsip, the capital of Bit-Adini, and received tribute from Hittite kings. He then proceeded to campaign through Urartu and Nairi, visiting Gilzanu and Hubuškia on his return journey to Kurruri, not far from the Assyrian city of Arbela (Erbil). These events are extensively described in the Kurkh Monolith, the relevant portion of which is conveniently re-edited by Lambert⁵. *STT* 43 accordingly

¹ W.G. Lambert, *Shalmaneser in Ararat*, AnSt 11 (1961), pp. 144-158.

² J.V. Kinnier Wilson, *The Kurba'il Statue of Shalmaneser III*, Iraq 24 (1962), pp. 106, 108.

³ *EAK* II, pp. 81-82.

⁴ A. Livingstone, *Court Poetry and Literary Miscellanea (State Archives of Assyria III)*, Helsinki 1989, no. 17, pp. 44-47.

⁵ Lambert, *ibid.*, pp. 146-148.

mentions, in Obv. 8-13, a burning of Til-Barsip, and the submission of Hittite kings. Then Shalmaneser goes on to campaign through Urartu and Nairi; on his way home he visits Gilzanu (following Lambert's reading of *STT* 43, Obv. 27) and Hubuškia. Afterwards there is a festival at Arbela.

The Shalmaneser dating is not without problems. According to the Kurkh Monolith Til-Barsip was abandoned by its ruler; Shalmaneser renamed it with an Assyrian name and settled Assyrians there. In *STT* 43, on the other hand, all that is said is that Til-Barsip was burned (or had been burned in some previous year). Shalmaneser did burn cities in Bit-Adini in the preceding years, 858-7, but Til-Barsip was not among them since the local king, Ahuni, took refuge there. According to the Kurkh Monolith account of 856, Shalmaneser also seems both to have crossed the Euphrates on a short expedition from Til-Barsip and to have received tribute sent to Til-Barsip by various kings. All this should have happened between 13 Iyyar, the date of his leaving Nineveh (Kurkh Monolith: Lambert's autopsy⁶) and the last favorable day of Iyyar (Lambert's understanding of *STT* 43, Obv. 27) when he started on his campaign from Til-Barsip to Urartu. Yet the journey from Nineveh to Til-Barsip, as the crow flies, is some 465 km. If Shalmaneser covered this ground in sixteen days, he would have been moving at an average rate of 29 km a day at the very least, in contrast with the maximum speed of 25 km daily for an Assyrian army cited by H. F. Russell⁷; nor does this leave much time for a rest or period of residence at Til-Barsip. The statistics are not insuperable but they are surprising.

The route is far more problematic. The Kurkh monolith takes Shalmaneser on a very long journey from Til-Barsip up to the Euphrates to Urartu; there are extensive details of the regions visited and the tribute taken. In *STT* 43, in contrast, the king does not necessarily start from Til-Barsip. To judge by a single reference to Šupria, which does not feature at all in the relevant section of the Kurkh Monolith, he takes another route. Šupria, which Shalmaneser actually attacked in his fifth year, 854, according to the Black Obelisk, is generally recognized as being in the Siirt region; it was certainly not on the Euphrates. So the king of *STT* 43 is apparently taking a route to Urartu from the Middle Tigris, different from the Kurkh Monolith route. After Urartu and Nairi, both texts have Hubuškia; but here the Kurkh Monolith has Shalmaneser fighting and plundering, whereas in *STT* 43 tribute is offered voluntarily. Finally, *STT* 43 mentions tribute from Tikki and Țurušpa (presumably the Urartian city by Lake Van), places that are absent from the otherwise far fuller account on the Monolith where the main

⁶ Lambert, *ibid.*, p. 154 fn. 8.

⁷ H.F. Russell, *Shalmaneser's Campaign to Urartu in 856 B.C. and the Historical Geography of Eastern Anatolia according to Assyrian Sources*, AnSt 34 (1984), p. 178.

Urartian city is instead Arzaškun. Kinnier Wilson does suggest, however, that the name of the royal city of Urartu in *STT* 43, Obv. 53, might be a corruption of Arzaškun.

Lambert of course was aware of these anomalies and contradictions in the two versions; further, he draws attention to the strange position in *STT* 43 occupied by tribute from Turuṣpa, since it would seem to imply either that the Urartians sent it on after the Assyrians or that the Assyrians left Urartu and then went back there, an extraordinary procedure in such terrain. The mention of the Urartian city after Hubuškia, rather than before it, would only make good sense in the context of the campaign of Shalmaneser's accession year, 859, when he invaded Urartu from the south-east, moving in the opposite direction to that attested for 856. Nevertheless Lambert eventually concludes⁸ that "there is still no reason to despise the historical content of the poetic account. Royal annals have also been suspected of having transferred material from one year to another in certain cases. There is no reason whatsoever to doubt that this text was written during the reign of Shalmaneser III, though it may not have been composed immediately after the completion of the campaign".

If *STT* 43 is ascribed to Shalmaneser III, then it would seem to be an imaginative conflation of events from 859, when he invaded Urartu through Hubuškia; 858-856, when he burned cities in Bit-Adini, captured Til-Bārsip, and received the submission of Hittite kings; and 854, when he invaded Šupria. Alternatively, some of the references might be to military operations led by officials other than the king himself. Whatever the explanation, the result is not far short of fiction. The name of the king who led the *STT* 43 campaign presumably appeared at the start of the text, which is largely lost. Later, a royal name appears twice (Obv. 16; Rev. 8). Oddly enough, this is not the name of Shalmaneser III but that of his father Ashurnasirpal. It appears in contexts which Lambert understands as references to the past, but it is by no means clear that this is necessary. Lambert⁹, referring to Ashurnasirpal's own previous attack or attacks on Urartu, concluded that the *STT* 43 account described a campaign at the beginning of Shalmaneser's reign conceived as a continuation of the work of his father. But is it possible that *STT* 43 describes a campaign not by Shalmaneser but by Ashurnasirpal himself?

No problems would be created for an Ashurnasirpal ascription by the name of the *turtānu*, Aššur-bel-ka'in, since if this man held office under Shalmaneser in 856, he might well have done so already under Ashurnasirpal. In fact he was to cease holding the post within a year or two, since Daian-Aššur held it as eponym in 853 and the eponyms at this

⁸) Lambert, *ibid.*, p. 156.

⁹) Lambert, *ibid.*, p. 147.

period are thought to have been named two years in advance. Ashurnasirpal campaigned as far as Urartu towards the end of his reign, probably in one of the years 864-860 for which no annalistic account survives. This dating derives from the well-known variability in a recurrent formula which summarizes the regions the king had visited; the most convenient analysis is by W. de Filippi¹⁰. Essentially, one text that includes a description of the 866 campaign (eponymate of Šamaš-nuri) has a long-established version of the formula, not mentioning Urartu; another text refers instead to the sources of the Tigris, suggesting that these were visited in 865 or later; yet other texts substitute Urartu, and were presumably written between 865 and the king's death in 859. Moreover, Ashurnasirpal's Banquet Stela, which must be one of his last texts, mentions representatives both from several regions which this king is known to have conquered or visited before 865, and from Gurgumu (Maraš), Malidu (Malatya), and Mušašir (the north-eastern corner of Iraq); their presence strongly suggests that Ashurnasirpal had visited or threatened these places also, which impinged on Urartu from the west and the south.

The problem with any ascription of *STT* 43 to Ashurnasirpal would be the mention of Til-Barsip, since there is no record of Ashurnasirpal's having captured or burned this town. On the contrary, some years previously, within the period 877-867, after Ashurnasirpal had burned Kaprabi in Bit-Adini, the king Ahuni had paid him tribute¹¹. Within this same period, however, there were nine more years for which no annalistic accounts survive. Again, Ashurnasirpal will not have been inactive. For instance, at some stage the Assyrians conquered Harran, where Shalmaneser is said (by Assurbanipal¹²) to have built the temple of Sin; but Harran, which lies only 80 km from Til-Barsip, is not mentioned in Shalmaneser's own annals, and it is possible, for all we know, that Ashurnasirpal was responsible for the conquest. There is plenty of room, within Ashurnasirpal's programme of intimidation of the Neo-Hittite states, for another war with Bit-Adini, in the course of which Til-Barsip was burned but not retained as a conquest, and it is notable that Shalmaneser in turn was to attack Bit-Adini in 859, his own first full year of reign.

If *STT* 43 is ascribed to Ashurnasirpal, then there must have been an otherwise unrecorded capture of Til-Barsip by this king. The campaign as described in *STT* 43 could start from Assyria rather than Til-Barsip, with a march up the Tigris and through

¹⁰ W. de Filippi, *The Royal Inscriptions of Aššur-Nāšir-Apli II (883-859 B.C.)*, Assur I/7 (1977), pp. 168-169.

¹¹ A.K. Grayson, *ARI* II, pp. 140-141.

¹² D.D. Luckenbill, *ARAB* II, p. 353.

¹³ For the geography see J.E. Reade, *Kassites and Assyrians in Iran*, *Iran* 16 (1978), pp. 138-140.

Šupria to Lake Van. This would bring the Assyrian army to the vicinity of the Urartian city of Țurušpa (and possibly Arzaškun, whose location is disputed); the appearance of the tribute from Țurušpa later in the campaign would remain unexplained. The army would then have crossed towards Lake Urmia on its way home, passing Gilzanu and Hubuškia, a route familiar from some other campaigns¹³.

Clearly the date and the historical validity of the campaign described in *STT* 43 remain arguable. For the time being, it is safest to regard the text simply as literature. What we should cease to do, without much louder reservations, is entitle it, as *SAA* III does, *Shalmaneser III's Campaign to Urartu*.