

12) A note to the Nebuchadnezzar inscription of Brisa (WBC) — The Nebuchadnezzar inscription of Brisa (Wadi esh-Sharbin, Lebanon) has been twice collated by the author (in 2007 and in 2008). Column IX of the exemplar written in Neo-Babylonian script (WBC) contains a passage of utmost importance for understanding the function of the inscription in its geographical setting:

- 47 $un^{meš} qé-re-eb^{kur} a-ab-na-nu$

a-bu-ri-iš ú-šar-bi-iš-ma

 $\lceil mu^1-ga-al-li-tu la ú-šar-ši-ši-[na-ti]$

50 $aš-šum ma-na-ma la ha-ba-li[-ši-na]$

 $[š]a-lam šar-ru-ti-ia da-rí-\lceil a^1-[ti]$

 $[ú-ša]-\lceil aš^1-\lceil bi^1-\lceil it^1 [i-na x x]$

 $[(x)] \lceil x^1 ši?/a[r x x x x x x]$

ab-ni-ma [x x x x x x]

55 $a-na-ku [x x x x x x]$

 $aš-ku-u[n x x x x x x]$

 $x [x x x x x x x x]$

Of interest is the Š-form of *šabātu* restored in l. 52. The dictionaries quote similar uses of the verb and explain it as “postieren” (AHw 1070 7 c) and “to set up an object” (CAD § 38 e). The verbal form with this rendering appears frequently in the Neo-Assyrian

inscriptions, and it is always in the context of stationing either watchmen for protection or statues of colossi or bulls at the gates, with the aim of protecting the entrance to important buildings. Note that AHW places under the meaning “postieren” also passages referring to stationing guards for protection, but the Chicago Dictionary explains them in a separate entry (CAD § 37 b): “to install someone in a feudal holding, in office”. In both uses of the verb there is an implicit connotation of protection.

Šuṣbutu appears often in the Neo-Assyrian inscriptions in the context of setting up colossi at gates with the aim of protecting the entrances of important buildings: OIP 2 97:85 *šēni šadî lamassi* statues of mountain sheep of silver and copper and of stone as protective deities set up at the thresholds at the entrance to the palace (*ú-ša-aš-bi-ta šigāršîn*) for protection; OIP 2 118:13 refers to bull-colossi of stone placed by the doors (*ú-ša-aš-bi-tu bābātēšîn*), similarly in OIP 2 105:78, in 110:25 and in 123:31. All these passages make reference to colossi situated at doorways, protecting entrances. The verb is also employed in this context in the inscriptions of Esarhaddon, AfO Beih. 9 95: 15-17 *rīmē siparri* (...) *ušēpišma ú-ša-aš-bi-ta šigār bābāniša*; and in the Verse Account of Nabonidus (AOAT 256 P1 II 15’: *rīmu ekdu kīma Esangil ú-ša-aš-bi-[i]t pānišu*. Finally, in a text of Sargon (TCL 3 286), the verb is used with reference to cities set up along the coast (*ina ahi tām̄ti*) as borders (*kīma ussi*).

Thus, the translation of the above passage of the Brisa inscription would be more or less as follows:

“I let the people in the Lebanon lie in safe pastures; I did not allow an intimidator (against them). So that nobody will oppress them, I **installed** an eternal image of myself as king **to protect** (them), [...] I built [...] I [...] I put [...].”

This interpretation fits perfectly within the context of this section of the inscription, of which we offer here the translation of the passages immediately before and after the one discussed above:

WBC IX 26-38: “With the strength of my lords Nabû and Marduk, I sent [my armies] regularly to Lebanon for battle. I expelled its (Lebanon’s) enemy above and below and I made the country happy. I reunited the scattered people and I brought them back to their place. What no former king had done (I did): I cut through the high mountains, I crushed the stones of the mountains, I opened up passes, I prepared a passage for (the transport of) the cedars for the king Marduk.”

WBC X 1-9: “[I reunited the scattered] people, in the totality of all lands, I wrote my inscription (and placed it) together with my royal image in the mountain passes, and

I set it up for the future. May a future one read it, may he be always mindful to speak the god's praise!"

The Brisa inscriptions, placed on both sides of the road in a ravine leading from the Beqa' to the cedar mountains, have a protective function in the territory in which they are "set up (for protection)" (*šušbutu*), just like the colossi and the wild bulls at the entrances.

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