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THE HARRAN INSCRIPTIONS OF NABONIDUS

By C. J. GADD

Discovery and Present Location

THE THREE STELAE bearing the inscriptions here published were discovered by Dr. D. S. Rice at Harran in August–September 1956, while he was engaged in examining the architecture of the ruined Great Mosque at that place. A preliminary account of his work, which is sufficient to convey the essential information about the positions and arrangement of these stones in the paving or steps of the Mosque, has been given by the discoverer in the *Illustrated London News* of 21st September, 1957, pp. 466 ff. All readers of this must admire the acumen which enabled Dr. Rice to “turn but a stone”, where so many “estranged faces” had missed its promise. The original monuments are stated to be kept for the present at a school-house in Urfa until arrangements have been made for their permanent conservation.

Nomenclature

Four monuments of the reign of Nabonidus having now been found at (or near) Harran, it will be convenient to give them the short title NABON. H (i.e. Harran). These four monuments carry two different inscriptions, there being two copies of each. It appears possible that one monument stood originally somewhere on each of the four sides of the Moon-god's temple, and thus we may be now in possession of all the memorials set up there by Nabonidus; in that event it would be enough to number them 1, 2, 3, 4. But on the contrary, yet other copies or even other inscriptions may have existed¹ and may be found in the future. Therefore, at the cost of a little more complication, numbers will be reserved for each of the two inscriptions: 1 for that of the royal Mother and 2 for that of the king himself. The two copies of each will then be distinguished as A and B:—

- NABON. H 1, A, the stele discovered by H. Pognon in 1906 at Eski Harran, and now in the Archaeological Museum at Ankara. Inscription of the royal Mother.
,, H 1, B, the stele discovered by D. S. Rice, 1956, in the pavement of the North entrance to the Great Mosque at Harran. Same inscription as preceding.

¹ One such is already extant in the long-known fragment of a stele in the British Museum, no. 90837: see L. W. King, *Babylonian Boundary Stones*, etc., Pl. XCIII f., pp. 128 f. (reproduced here, Plate III(a)), and for later references R. Borger, *Die Inschriften Assarhaddons (AfO., Beiheft 9)*, p. 121. Owing to absence of all direct information of provenance for this important object, which will several times be mentioned in the succeeding pages, I do not venture to give it the designation Nabon. H 3, although its inscription was clearly different from the two here in question, and its origin from Harran must be considered probable. It had already been acutely assigned to Nabonidus by Professor B. Landsberger, in his study to be named immediately.

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NABON. H 2, A, the stele, discovered as above, in the pavement of the East entrance to the Mosque. Inscription of the King.

„ H 2, B, the stele, discovered as above, at the West entrance. Same inscription as preceding.

NABONIDUS H 1, B

TRANSLATION

Col. I.

1. I (am) the lady Adda-guppi', mother
2. of Nabium-na'id, king of Babylon,
3. votaress of the gods Sin, Nin-gal, Nusku,
4. and Sadarnunna, my deities ;
5. who, from my childhood, have sought after
6. their godheads. Whereas in the 16th year of Nabopolassar,
7. king of Babylon, Sin, king of the gods, with his city
8. and his temple was angry and went up to heaven—the city and
9. the people that (were) in it went to ruin.
10. (Now) forasmuch as the shrines of Sin, Nin-gal, Nusku,
11. and Sadarnunna I sought after and was worshipper of their godhead,
12. (and) that I laid hold on the hem of the robe of Sin, king of the gods,
night and daytime
13. I had ever in mind his great godhead—daily, without ceasing,
14. of Sin, Šamaš, Ištar, and Adda, so long as I am alive,
15. I (am) their votaress (both) in heaven and earth. My blessings,
16. the goodly things which they gave me, I (too) by day, night, month,
and year, gave (back) to them.
17. I laid hold on the hem of the robe of Sin, king of the gods, night and
daytime
18. my two eyes were with him, in prayer and humility of face
19. was I bowed before them (and) thus (I prayed), “ May thy return
20. to thy city be (vouchsafed) to me, that the people, the black-headed,
21. may worship thy great godhead.” For calming
22. the heart of my god and my goddess, a dress of fine wool, jewels,
23. silver, gold, a new shift, perfumes, sweet oil,
24. I applied not to my body, (but in) a torn shift
25. I went clothed, my goings-out were noiseless, I proclaimed
26. their praises : the glory of my city and of my goddess
27. was (ever) set in my heart, I kept watch upon them,
28. anything good of mine I did not omit, but carried it (ever) before them.
29. From the 20th year of Aššurbanipal, king of Assyria, that I was born (in)
30. until the 42nd year of Aššurbanipal, the 3rd year of Aššur-etillu-ili,
31. his son, the 21st year of Nabopolassar, the 43rd year of Nebuchadrezzar,
32. the 2nd year of Awēl-Marduk, the 4th year of Neriglissar,
33. in 95 years of the god Sin, king of the gods of heaven and earth,
34. (in) which I sought after the shrines of his great godhead,
35. (for) my good doings he looked upon me with a smile
36. he heard my prayers, he granted my saying, the wrath
37. of his heart calmed. Towards E-ḫul-ḫul the temple of Sin
38. which (is) in Harran, the abode of his heart's delight, he was reconciled,
he had

39. regard. Sin, king of the gods, looked upon me and
 40. Nabu-na'id (my) only son, the issue of my womb, to the kingship
 41. he called, and the kingship of Sumer and Akkad
 42. from the border of Egypt (on) the upper sea even to the lower sea
 43. all the lands he entrusted hither
 44. to his hands. My two hands I lifted up and to Sin, king of the gods,
 45. reverently with imploration [(I prayed) thus, "Nabu-na'id
 46. (my) son, offspring of my womb, beloved of his mother,]

Col. II.

1. thou hast called him to the kingship, thou hast pronounced his name,
 2. at the command of thy great godhead may the great gods
 3. go at his two sides, may they make his enemies to fall,
 4. forget not, (but) make good E-ḫul-ḫul and the finishing of its foundation(?) ”.
 5. When in my dream, his two hands had been laid on, Sin, king of the gods,
 6, 7. spoke to me thus, “With thee I will put into the hands of Nabu-na'id, thy son, the return of the gods and the habitation of Harran ;
 8. He shall build E-ḫul-ḫul, shall perfect its structure, (and) Harran
 9. more than (it was) before he shall perfect and restore it to its place.
 10. The hand of Sin, Nin-gal, Nusku, and Sadarnunna
 11. he shall clasp and cause them to enter E-ḫul-ḫul ”. The word of Sin,
 12. king of the gods, which he spoke to me I honoured, and I myself saw (it fulfilled) ;
 13. Nabu-na'id, (my) only son, offspring of my womb, the rites
 14. forgotten of Sin, Nin-gal, Nusku, and
 15. Sadarnunna he perfected, E-ḫul-ḫul
 16. anew he built and perfected its structure, Harran more
 17. than before he perfected and restored it to its place ; the hand
 18. of Sin, Nin-gal, Nusku, and Sadarnunna from
 19. Šuanna his royal city he clasped, and in the midst of Harran
 20. in E-ḫul-ḫul the abode of their hearts' ease with gladness
 21. and rejoicing he let them dwell. What from former times Sin, king of the gods,
 22. had not done and had not granted to anybody (he did) for the love of me
 23. who had ever worshipped his godhead, laid hold on the hem of his robe—Sin, king of the gods,
 24. uplifted my head and set upon me a good name in the land,
 25. long days, years of heart's ease he multiplied upon me.
 26. From the time of Aššurbanipal, king of Assyria, until the 9th year
 27. of Nabu-na'id king of Babylon, the son, offspring of my womb
 28. 104 years of happiness, with the reverence which Sin, king of the gods,

29. placed in me, he made me flourish, my own self : the sight of my two eyes
30. is clear, I am excellent in understanding, my hand and both feet are sound,
31. well-chosen are my words, meat and drink
32. agree with me, my flesh is goodly, glad is my heart.
33. My descendents to four generations from me flourishing in themselves
34. I have seen, I am fulfilled (with) offspring. O Sin, king of the gods, for favour
35. thou hast looked upon me, thou hast lengthened my days : Nabu-na'id, king of Babylon,
36. my son, to Sin my lord I have devoted him. So long as he is alive
37. let him not offend against thee ; the genius of favour, genius of favour which (to be) with me
38. thou hast appointed and they have caused me to attain offspring, with him (too)
39. appoint (them), and wickedness and offence against thy great godhead
40. endure not, (but) let him worship thy great godhead. In the 21 years
41. of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, in the 43 years of Nebuchadrezzar,
42. son of Nabopolassar, and 4 years of Neriglissar, king of Babylon,
43. (when) they exercised the kingship, for 68 years
44. with all my heart I revered them, I kept watch over them,
45. Nabu-na'id (my) son, offspring of my womb, before Nebuchadrezzar
46. son of Nabopolassar and (before) Neriglissar, king of Babylon, I caused him to stand,
47. daytime and night he kept watch over them
48. what was pleasing to them he performed continually,
49. my name he made (to be) favourite in their sight, (and) like
50. [a daughter of] their [own] they uplifted my head

Col. III. (Translation of lines 1-19 is supplemented from the duplicate inscription, as rendered by B. Landsberger, loc. cit.)

1. I nourished (their spirits), and incense offering
2. rich, of sweet savour,
3. I appointed for them continually and
4. laid ever before them.
5. (Now) in the 9th year of Nabu-na'id,
6. king of Babylon, the fate
7. of herself carried her off, and
8. Nabu-na'id, king of Babylon,
9. (her) son, issue of her womb,
10. her corpse entombed, and [robes]

11. splendid, a bright mantle
12. gold, bright
13. beautiful stones, [precious] stones,
14. costly stones
15. sweet oil her corpse he [anointed]
16. they laid it in a secret place. [Oxen and]
17. sheep (especially) fattened he [slaughtered]
18. before it. He assembled [the people]
19. of Babylon and Borsippa, [with the people]
20. dwelling in far regions, [kings, princes, and]
21. governors, from [the border]
22. of Egypt on the Upper Sea
23. (even) to the Lower Sea he [made to come up],
24. mourning and
25. weeping he performed, [dust?]
26. they cast upon their heads, for 7 days
27. and 7 nights with
28. they cut themselves(?), their clothes
29. were cast down(?). On the seventh day
30. the people(?) of all the land their hair(?)
31. shaved, and
32. their clothes
33. the of their clothes
34. in(?) their places(?)
35. they ? to
36. at meat(?)
37. perfumes refined he amassed(?)
38. sweet oil upon the heads [of the people]
39. he poured out, their hearts
40. he made glad, he [cheered(?)]
41. their minds, the road [to their homes]
42. he did not(?) withhold(?)
43. to their own places they went.
44. Do thou, whether a king or a prince

(Remainder too fragmentary for translation until :—)

51. Fear (the gods), in heaven and earth
52. pray to them, [neglect] not [the utterance]
53. of the mouth of Sin and the goddess
54. of thy seed
55. make safe the of thy seed
56. [ever(?)] and for [ever(?)].

CHRONOLOGY AND HISTORY

(1) *The Last Kings of Assyria*

The inscription H 1 (of the royal Mother) gives, in its present more complete form (B),¹ no less than three arithmetical summaries covering the end of Assyrian rule and almost the whole of the Chaldaean dynasty in Babylonia :

Col. I, 29-35.

The narrator was born in the 20th year of Assurbanipal.

She survived the 42nd year of Aššurbanipal,

3rd „ „ Aššur-etillu-ili, his son,

21st „ „ Nabopolassar,

43rd „ „ Nebuchadrezzar

2nd „ „ Evil-Merodach,

4th „ „ Neriglissar.

A total of 95 years.

Col. II, 26-8.

She lived from the time ² of Aššurbanipal to the 9th year of Nabonidus her son, 104 years.

Col. II, 40-3.

She served the kings of Babylon during

21 years of Nabopolassar,

43 „ „ Nebuchadrezzar,

4 „ „ Neriglissar.

A total of 68 years, before her son's accession.

¹ The first two of these summaries were already present in A, but the former was defective, and most of the figures missing.

² Lit. "from before", i.e. she came into the world during the lifetime of Aššurbanipal.

The last of these merely repeats figures given in the first, pointedly omitting Evil-Merodach, from whose court she was banished, or absented herself, no doubt for the reasons, whatever they were, which earned that king an evil repute in the official tradition ; this is represented by a stigma in Nabonidus,¹ and also by a statement in Josephus (from Berossus) that he ruled "lawlessly and wantonly". The brief interlude of Labaši-Marduk is nowhere noticed.²

From the second summary one factor is omitted, the year of her birth, one added, her death in the 9th year of her son's reign, and a total for the whole term of her life is supplied, by adding the nine years of her son³ to the 95 of the first summary.

Restoration of the complete figures in the first summary is one of the principal services of the new inscription, for the lengths of all but two reigns were missing from the earlier-found copy. Most valuable in it is the first statement which has ever been available for the full extent of Aššurbanipal's reign, 42 years ; this compares with the latest date hitherto obtained, from a contract of his 38th year.⁴ Since we may not venture to doubt this explicit statement of a contemporary, making a carefully-calculated reckoning,⁵ we now have to recognise that the reign of Aššurbanipal lasted until the year 627-626.⁶ After this there were, according to the inscription, three years⁷ of Aššur-etillu-ili, his son, before the first year of Nabopolassar. But it is now fixed by a chronicle⁸ that Nabopolassar ascended the throne of Babylon in November 626, so that his "first year" began in March 625. Taking the earliest possible limit, Aššurbanipal's death cannot have occurred before April 627. From this to the accession of Nabopolassar (November 626) is 18 months, to the beginning of his first year (March 625) something less than 24 months, and of course the actual interval, depending upon the time of year when Aššurbanipal died, may have been still less. How the "three years" of Aššur-etillu-ili are to be fitted into this space is a problem indeed.

A similar difficulty is encountered if the figures of this new inscription

¹ S. Langdon, *VAB.* IV, Nabon. no. 8, col. IV, 37 ff. ; cf. *ANET.* p. 309.

² Reason enough ; for according to the same authority Nabonidus himself was among the "friends" by whom that hapless youth "was clubbed to death".

³ This statement, occurring in the "1st. person" part of the inscription, is not conceivable as made by the deceased herself, but has been intruded by the author of the concluding ("3rd person") part.

⁴ Quoted in D. J. Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldaean Kings*, p. 92, see n. 2.

⁵ Somewhat in the manner which Herodotus (II, 143) attributes to Hecataeus.

⁶ This is, in fact, where it used to be given, on the supposition that Aššurbanipal was identical with Kandalanu. The "42jährige Regierung" attributed in A. Scharff und A. Moortgat, *Ägypten und Vorderasien im Altertum*, p. 425, evidently depends upon the same assumption.

⁷ Clearly, this does not indicate the whole reign of Aššur-etillu-ili, for there is a contract dated in the latter part of his 4th year (Wiseman, loc. cit. gives the reference). The royal Mother, however, rigidly confines herself to those whom she regarded as legitimate kings of Babylon. After the accession of the family to which she adhered all other pretenders are ignored.

⁸ Wiseman, op. cit. p. 50, lines 14, 15, cf. pp. 7, 93.

are compared with the Ptolemaic Canon.¹ There, as is well known, the reign of Aššurbanipal is not mentioned, for it is represented, in the Babylonian succession, by the subordinate kings Saosduchinos (20 years) and Kineladanos (22 years). The first of these was the successor of Asaradinos (Esarhaddon), who died in 669; ² the "first year" of Šamaš-šum-ukin was 667, and he himself died at the capture of Babylon by his brother in 648. Kandalanu in turn died in 626, after a reign of 22 years, that is, in all probability, one year after Aššurbanipal, for although the aggregate of Saosduchinos (20) and of Kineladanos (22) now equals the attested reign of Aššurbanipal (42) it is to be noticed that the Assyrian king's years began to be counted one year before those of his "Babylonian" brother.³ Thus, the same situation is reached: Aššurbanipal died (at the very earliest) in April 627, Kandalanu in 626 and very soon afterwards (November 626) Nabopolassar succeeded. Between the death of the first and the accession of the last probably not more than one year, in no case more than 18 months, can be reckoned, and not so much as two years even if the interval be extended to the beginning of Nabopolassar's "first year". The required "three years" of Aššur-etillu-ili seem, therefore, to posit about two years more than our evidence makes available.

Yet again the discrepancy appears in the account given by the Mother herself: she was born in the 20th year of Aššurbanipal, and she died, aged 104, in the 9th year of her son's reign, i.e. in 547. Reckoning back from this, she should have been born in $547 + 104 = 651$. But the 20th year of Aššurbanipal began in 649.

This difficulty is much increased when the reign of Sin-šar-iškun is also taken into consideration, for there has appeared to be sufficient indication that he too was king of Assyria before the accession of Nabopolassar. The evidence is as follows:

- (1) In a chronicle ⁴ of the year 626, two months before the accession of Nabopolassar, Sin-šar-iškun was in command of an Assyrian army.
- (2) A contract from Babylon itself ⁵ is dated in his accession-year.
- (3) According to Berossus, ⁶ it was "Sarakos" (Sin-šar-iškun) himself who sent "Bupalosoros" (Nabopolassar) to command his army in Babylonia, after which the latter revolted and marched against Nineveh.

Nothing is known about the relations of Aššur-etillu-ili and of Sin-šar-iškun, both of whom were successors of Aššurbanipal, one, probably both, being his son. The former is shown by contracts to have ruled for

¹ F. K. Ginzel, *Handbuch der mathematischen und technischen Chronologie*, I, p. 139.

² W. H. Dubberstein in *JNES*. III (1944), p. 38.

³ W. H. Dubberstein, loc. cit.

⁴ D. J. Wiseman, *Chronicles*, pp. 50 ff., cf. pp. 43, 90.

⁵ Quoted by A. Goetze, in *JNES*. III, 44, with n. 15.

⁶ P. Schnabel, *Berossos*, p. 271.

at least four, the latter for at least seven, years,¹ and he is known to have disappeared at the fall of Nineveh in 612: it is thought that some part of the reigns may have overlapped.² However this may be, the new evidence from Harran makes it extremely difficult to insert any part of the reign of Sin-šar-iškun in the very brief interval between Aššurbanipal and Nabopolassar, where not even enough space is left for the posited "three years" of Aššur-etillu-ili. The suggestion made recently,³ for which there seemed good reasons, that Sin-šar-iškun came to the throne of Assyria in 629 must now, it appears, be discarded; and yet to suppose (as would otherwise be most natural) that his reign fell wholly within the first 14 years of Nabopolassar is put in very serious difficulty by the three pieces of evidence quoted above.

In the present state of our knowledge⁴ it is hardly worth while elaborating conjectures to account for these seeming discrepancies:

- (a) that the Harran inscription appears to require about two years more between the death of Aššurbanipal and the accession of Nabopolassar than our evidence, including the Ptolemaic Canon, puts at our disposal;
- (b) that the reign of Sin-šar-iškun, which otherwise should have begun before that of Nabopolassar, is now seemingly excluded from the brief interval then occurring.

¹ See M. San Nicolò, *Babylonische Rechtsurkunden . . . 8. und . . . 7. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.*, p. 129 (at Erech).

² It is possible, of course, that Aššurbanipal, having two sons, purported before his death to appoint them kings of Assyria and of Babylon respectively, following the precedent of his own accession. But there is absolutely no evidence of this, and nothing to show that they ever acted in these separate characters. In their scanty inscriptions both use the title "king of Assyria"; cf. also the "Nabopolassar Chronicle", line 44.

³ D. J. Wiseman, *op. cit.* pp. 5 f., 91 f., also W. von Soden in a review of that work, *WZKM.* 53 (1957), p. 319.

⁴ There is no little irony in this situation—what more should a chronologist desire than a plain statement from an exceptionally long-lived contemporary, making a careful count of years?