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THE ARCHAIC INSCRIPTION IN DÉCOUVERTES  
EN CHALDÉE, PLATE 1 bis

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NO TRANSLATION of this very archaic and difficult inscription has, so far as I know, ever been published. Four or five years ago I worked out a translation of it, but the only portion of it which has been published was five lines which I quoted in the article 'Poles and Posts' in Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. 9, p. 91. Since that time I have given the text further study and herewith present the results.

Face.

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| <p>i, 1. <i>nêr eš nunuz<sup>1</sup>-gál<sup>2</sup>-ti<sup>3</sup></i><br/>         2. <i>giš-nu-rú nu-gi-rú en-nam-àg</i><br/>         3. <i>išib<sup>4</sup> te<sup>5</sup>-ti<sup>6</sup>-gě<sup>7</sup> gin</i><br/>         4. <i>nu-ġup sag-pa nu-ġup en-nam-àg</i></p> | <p>i, 1. 630 strong, living saplings,<br/>         2. wood unworked, reeds unworked, Ennamag,<br/>         3. the priest suitable for a dwelling brought.<br/>         4. Uninjured was the chief officer, uninjured was Ennamag.</p> |
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<sup>1</sup> The sign *numuz*, which primarily means 'necklace' means also 'shoot', 'offspring'; see Barton, *Babylonian Writing* (hereafter cited as OBW) no. 348, 2 and 6. It is either equivalent to the Akkadian *lipu* (Brünnow, 8177; hereafter cited as B.) or to *pîr'u*, (B. 8179). The next line implies that the material designated by this sign was large enough to be 'worked'; it must, therefore, have been a young growth of some size. I have accordingly rendered it 'sapling'.

<sup>2</sup> See OBW, 87 5. <sup>3</sup> See OBW, 76 5. <sup>4</sup> See OBW, 478 27. <sup>5</sup> OBW, 330 33.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. OBW, 76 2 which gives the verb *ašâbu*. A sign which stands for an act usually also stands for the corresponding noun.

<sup>7</sup> *gě* (OBW, 439 6) stands for the numeral 'one'. Here it is used in the sense of the indefinite article 'a', or, better, as a substitute for *ge*, the post-position, (OBW, 269 1).

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| <p>5. àg-nam-en<sup>8</sup> šag-sam gub<br/>gār<sup>9</sup> urù<sup>10</sup>-maš rú</p> <p>6. igi-da-šù sam-gid sam-šù<br/>gú<sup>11</sup> gub</p> <p>7. igi urù tu<sup>12</sup> en-nam-ag</p> <p>8. šag sam gà(?)<sup>13</sup> en-nam-<br/>àg</p> | <p>5. Ennamag in the vegetation placed bricks; the princely dwelling made.</p> <p>6. At the front side was tall vegetation; by the vegetation he placed the wall.</p> <p>7. At the front of the dwelling entered Ennamag.</p> <p>8. In the vegetation Ennamag established (it).</p> |
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Reverse.

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| <p>i, 1. nu n[am]-lal<sup>14</sup> šu<sup>15</sup><br/>engar<sup>16</sup></p> <p>2. me-me<sup>17</sup> zag<sup>18</sup>-ka</p> <p>3. nin-gir-su išib zag</p> <p>4. en-ši igi-gà gál</p> <p>5. [nin]-su-gir išib.</p> <p>ii, 1. bara lil ner-v ba-gál</p> <p>2. dnin(?) gál</p> <p>3. eš . . . . .</p> <p>4. . . . . .</p> <p>iii, 1. en-nam-àg</p> <p>2. ud tu gà nin-[gir-su]<br/>išib-lal<sup>20</sup> ba-ge<sup>21</sup>-ti</p> | <p>i, 1. No peasant raised a curse.</p> <p>2. It was the command of the oracle;</p> <p>3. Ningirsu was priest of the oracle.</p> <p>4. The seeing lord guards before the house;</p> <p>5. Ningirsu is priest.</p> <p>ii, 1. The sanctuary the spirits, the five igigi<sup>19</sup>, protect;</p> <p>2. the divine lady protects.</p> <p>3. Thirty . . . . .</p> <p>4. . . . . .</p> <p>iii, 1. Ennamag,</p> <p>2. when he entered the house, Ningirsu, the high priest, received (him).</p> |
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<sup>8</sup> This is an example of the fact that in early Sumerian writing of proper names the order of the syllables frequently varies. So long as all the elements were written, they seem to have been careless of the order.

<sup>9</sup> This is an unusual form of *gār*, but is, I believe, rightly identified with that sign. Cf. OBW, 509.

<sup>10</sup> OBW, 57 15.

<sup>11</sup> OBW, 120 2.

<sup>12</sup> OBW, 57 4.

<sup>13</sup> OBW, 230 21.

<sup>14</sup> OBW, 440 2.

<sup>15</sup> OBW, 311 1.

<sup>16</sup> OBW, 55 5.

<sup>17</sup> OBW, 478 22.

<sup>18</sup> OBW, 491 36.

<sup>19</sup> For the use of this ideogram to designate *igigi*, see OBW, 442 2.

<sup>20</sup> For this meaning of *lal* see OBW, 440 52. It seems to be used here instead of *mağ*.

<sup>21</sup> This use of *ge* as a verb infix is most unusual. I take it to be an

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| 3. <i>ba-an-gál</i>  | 3. There guarded it ( <i>a-gál</i> )                                  |
| 4. <i>dka[l]</i>   | 4. the god Kal.   |
| iv, 1. <i>tab gizi</i> <sup>22</sup> <i>é-ġu me nirba</i><br><i>ú</i>                | iv, 1. (There were) two posts, a bird-house where was grain for food. |
| 2. <i>nin-gir-su gizi</i> <sup>23</sup> <i>dingir-dim</i> <sup>24</sup> <i>te(?)</i> | 2. Ningirsu propitiated the great plant god(?).                       |
| 3. <i>nig-gan da-še</i>  | 3. The possession of a field bearing grain                            |
| 4. <i>nin é-dim</i>  | 4. was the lady's of the great house.                                 |
| v, 1. <i>nin-gir-su dingir</i>   | v, 1. Ningirsu is a god;  |
| 2. <i>gir-su išib</i>  | 2. (at) Girsu he is priest.   |
| 3. <i>nirba ú ġu me tab-é</i>  | 3. Grain is the food of birds; they are companions of the house.      |
| 4. <i>nin-gir-su [nir]ba . . . .</i>   | 4. Ningirsu the grain . . . .   |
| 5. <i>gan šar nig-uri</i> <sup>25</sup>  | 5. A field, a garden, a possession of palm-tree land,                 |
| vi, 1. <i>gan iv bur zal-ter</i>   | vi, 1. a field of 4 <i>bur</i> , abounding in trees;                  |
| 2. <i>xxxvic bur šar-uri</i>   | 2. 3600 <i>bur</i> , a garden of palm-tree land;                      |
| 3. <i>l ġu išib-šù</i>   | 3. 50 birds for divining;   |
| 4. <i>xxx suġur</i> <sup>26-a</sup>  | 4. 30 goat-fish(?);   |
| 5. <i>xviiiic bur zal dū</i>   | 5. 1800 <i>bur</i> abounding in dwellings;                            |
| 6. <i>i uzu</i>  | 6. 1 diviner.   |

It cannot be too strongly emphasized that any translation of an inscription of this nature is, in the present state of our knowledge, purely tentative. Nevertheless the way in which, according to the interpretation reached, the parts of the text fit together lends a good degree of probability that the rendering is on the right track. The text describes the building

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example of that carelessness as to the order of the signs which appears in the early writing. In other words it is for *ge-ba-ti*, the *ge* being for *ġe* = 'verily'.

<sup>22</sup> OBW, 327 16.

<sup>23</sup> OBW, 327 21, 26-23.

<sup>24</sup> OBW, 60 7.

<sup>25</sup> OBW, 316 3, 5, 6.

<sup>26</sup> OBW, 363 1.

of a primitive sanctuary, the establishment of a god in it, the equipment of the temple with a flock of sacred birds, for divining, and the endowment of the temple with lands for its support.

The name of the builder of the temple, Ennamag, means 'lord of building' and might be translated 'architect'. One is at some loss to know whether so to translate it, or to regard it as a proper name. After much hesitation it was decided to regard it as a proper name. At the front of the structure two posts were erected. These remind one of the Asheras erected in connection with Semitic sanctuaries. The face of the tablet pictures a man, probably Ennamag, in the act of grasping one of these posts.

The statement that 'no peasant raised a curse' shows that Ennamag had taken care to satisfy the land-owners and cultivators of the vicinity, so as to prevent their invoking the ill-will of any supernatural powers against the building. This was, from the ancient point of view, very important. Manishtusu, as we learn from his obelisk inscription, took great pains to do the same for a new settlement that he undertook, as did Sargon king of Assyria, centuries afterwards.<sup>27</sup> The appearance of the name 'Ningirsu' in the various parts of the tablet is interesting and somewhat puzzling. In i, 3 of the reverse of the tablet Ningirsu, written without determinative for deity, is said to be *išib zag*, 'priest of the high-place' or 'oracle'. Again in i, 5 Ningirsu, again without determinative for deity, is said to be *išib*, 'priest'. Again in iii, 2 it is said that, when Ennamag entered the house, Ningirsu, still written with no determinative for deity—Ningirsu, described as *išib-lal*, 'exalted priest' or 'high priest', received him. It is natural to assume in all these cases that Ningirsu is the name of a human being who is acting as a priest. But in v, 1 and 2 it is stated, that Ningirsu, again without a determinative, 'is a god, at Girsu, a priest'. Does this mean that Ningirsu was, at the time this text was written, a man on the point of being deified? That is a tempting theory. In that case the famous god of Lagash, who is so prominent in the texts from that city from those of Ur-nina to those of Gudea, originated in the deification of a human being.

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<sup>27</sup> See *KB* ii. 46. 47.

There is, however, another possibility. Ningirsu may be the name of a deity wherever it occurs in our text, and this deity may have been regarded as a kind of priest among the gods.

The god 'Kal', mentioned in iii, 4 of the reverse, is designated by the sign which afterward designated *lamassu* or *šêdu*, the guardian deities which guarded the portals of temples and palaces. We might render the two lines referring to him, 'He (Ennamag) set up the god Kal'. If Ningirsu were the deity within the sanctuary, then Kal was the spirit which guarded the doors.

Finally, the sign *uri*, which I have translated 'palm-tree land', is the sign later employed as the ideogram for Akkad. Professor Clay has shown that *uri* or *uru* is another spelling of Amurru. This might, therefore, be translated 'a possession of Amurru', a 'garden of Amurru'. True, the sign has in the text no determinative for place, but neither is the name Girsu followed by such a determinative. Indeed, it seems probable that the text comes from a time before the use of determinatives had fully developed.